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## The Times Literary Supplement

November 11 1983 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 4BX

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Cover picture: Self-portrait by Man Ray (1914), on show at the Anthony D'Offy Gallery, 23 Dering Street, London W1.

### AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 148

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than December 2. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 148" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 4BX.

1 You are middle-aged now, as I am. Write your notes up.

2 The rattling window. Keep your marriage vows. As I shall.

3 Damsels sit, like your duty to get married. You can't always live for pleasure. Every man of position is married nowadays. Bachelors are not fashionable any more. They are a damaged lot.

4 Why have such scores of lovely, gifted girls married impossible men?

5 Simple self-sacrifice may be ruled out. And philosophy endeavour, like times put of pen.

1 It was at this window that the clergyman who dwelt in the Minster stood watching the outlaws long and deeply struggle between two notions – saw the irregular array of his parishioners on the farther side of the river and the glittering towers of the tower bank.

2 Take the wings Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness Or lose thyself in the continuous woods Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound. Save his own dashings – yet the dead lie there. And millions in those solitudes, since first The flight of years began, have laid their heads down, in their last sleep – the dead reign here.

William Cullen Bryant, "Thanatopsis"

3 This huge green fragment of forest which I have discovered early this century. Dating from the T'ang and Five Dynasties periods, these texts represent the only surviving primary evidence of a widespread and flourishing world of popular enlightenment at this time.

4 Another cake: stumbling, leaping, and so on upward again! Her shoes were gone – her feet were out from her feet – while blood marked her feet.

5 But she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dawn. In dream, she saw the Ohio Alps, and a man leaping up the peak.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Minister's Black Veil"

## Committed in committee

Liam Hudson

F. G. BAILEY  
*The Tactical Uses of Passion: An Essay on Power, Reason, and Reality*  
275pp. Cornell University Press. £25 (paperback, £8.50). 08014 1556 X

Like most devices that devour our lives, committees are hard to place. We accept them as filling the gap between youthful idealism and pension, but still they hover uncertainly in the mind, refusing to be quite simply this or that. On the one hand, the committee is the orderly way of doing things. Reason is its dominant virtue. Yet it is the committee, more than any other feature of institutional life, that forces us to acknowledge, as Oakeshott warned his son, "how small a part reason plays in governing the world". For all its air of rationality, the elaboration of its procedural rules, the committee remains a focus of unease. While some of the doubts and ambiguities it generates are practical – matters of how committees work, what purposes they serve – others are, for lack of a better word, moral. Committees are shrouded in a sense of the equivocal; and they are so for a single reason, but for a nest of reasons that are woven into one another and loosely interlocked.

Churchill, it is said, after a passionately patriotic speech in the Commons during the war, finding defiance in Hitler's face, shaking his audience with emotion and shaking himself too, stepped outside and, with an impish grin, remarked to a caddy "That got the sods, didn't it?" If you are worldly wise such a comment fits into place as part of the management of an unruly world, a recognition of its contradictions. If not, it edges dangerously close to the obscene.

Many of us who fail to achieve worldly wisdom none the less shuffle towards it, despite idealism fades. Churchill, it slowly dawns, may have been an actor whose cause was impeccable; a showman, but a man of destiny too, whose comments off-stage are an irrelevance.

Those asides of his might even have been an admission of humility; his acknowledgment, after god-like flight, that he was just as boringly mortal as the man passing water at his left or right elbow. To be the vehicle of history is bound to exert a psychological strain; and the

strain is there even when history chooses to express itself through Minor Works.

Yet however much of a pro ooe is, such a story must stir a ripple of disquiet. (And if it does not stir a ripple, it ought to, one is tempted to say.) We can repeat it with relish, match it with chestnuts about Harold Wilson or Lloyd George, adopt the sardonic tone appropriate to the inside track. But a sense of moral uneasiness refuses quite to evaporate. It is part of our vision of a just life that there should be no such chasm between the story told to the audience across the footlights and the story told behind the hand.

All this, it need hardly be said, is the stuff of social science. Power and persuasion; the social construction of rationality; the institutional basis of political action. One would expect social scientists to have pored in their scores over the committees in their own universities for the past half century or more; to have used them as the basis of countless scholarly inquiries. Here, for once, they are not outsiders trying to make sense of the alien, grappling with language barriers and strange customs. They already know what it is like to sit around that particular sort of table and observe those procedural rules. They have immediate access to what passes through the actors' minds: they can talk to them over coffee afterwards, or, simpler still, introspect.

Yet for all the thousands of anthropologists, sociologists, social psychologists and political scientists who have danced with brilliance on the academic stage, scarcely one has so much as hinted at an academic interest in what committees do. Why? The moment the question is posed, it answers itself. They cannot make explicit the ways in which this particular set of games are played without spoiling their own chances of winning them. If Churchill had preceded his heart-stirring address to the Commons with an impish grin and a widely audible remark about getting the sods, his address would have appeared psychotic.

This, then, is the social scientist's dilemma. How does he split the beans while preserving his position? It is one that *The Tactical Uses of Passion* makes a brave bid to resolve. F. G. Bailey is an anthropologist, used to recombining cultures, who has already taken committees seriously, and here does so again. As his title implies, he is interested in how people get their way, and others are swept aside to order that this can happen. His texts he takes from his

own experience of sitting in committees, from works of political science, including the Churchill story just mentioned, and from literature, particularly C. P. Snow and John le Carré.

Professor Bailey's treatment of the committee is heavily weighted towards the practical. In undertaking it, he remains within the social scientist's equivalent of the kirk. Notoriously, though, a danger awaits. In a field like this, dispassion slips easily into relish, and relish into celebration. Inadvertently, he may create new heroes. His observations may be all the more persuasively a matter of "ought" for being cast onto the page in the form of "is".

The early chapters of *The Tactical Uses of Passion* establish Bailey as scholarly. If, in the end, he is going to fall into this particularly modern error, it will not be through carelessness. He will do so because his treatment of committee life is in understandable but dangerous ways partial, and because the error is, in any case, extraordinarily difficult to avoid.

In the event, these early chapters are given over to issues that should be the concern of psychologists but are left to neighbours: the notion, for example, that there are colonies of selves in each of us – the tactical, moral, civic, silly and divine selves – and that these are deployed, within contexts like that of a committee, according to certain detectable rhythms. It is the civic self that provides the dominant tone of a committee's work, but excursions are executed either into displays of hostility, where moral or tactical selves come into operation, or into demonstrations of solidarity, where it is the jokes of the silly self that do the work. Phrases like "Time to get down to business..." and "The task that faces us..." signal that the civic self is asserting itself, in the speaker's mind at least; whereas phrases like "I thought we did that rather well..." and "We're on form today..." show that it is a traffic that permits distance too. (The moral self enters this analysis, if his values are affronted. It is an element in the struggle to get his own way.)

A committee is seen as having a "career", moving, in principle, from impatience, a phase dominated by the tactical self, through solidarity, through maturity, during which members evolve and use what Bailey calls a "sophisticated code", to sanity, where sophistications become an end in themselves. Bailey examines the rhetorics of assertion and compromise,

largely by means of examples from politicians' speeches; but it is the sophisticated code that exerts the greatest fascination, and it is to this that he returns towards the end.

A passage from Snow's *The Search* is dwelt upon: the one in which the members of an exalted scientific committee bicker with one another about whether to meet in London, Oxford or Cambridge, or somewhere further afield. As it happens, Snow's dialogue has worn badly. Men of science can still be heard to niggle with one another in that embarrassingly sinewy yet pea-brained way, but they do so now in parody of a manner long abandoned. A sense of immediacy returns when Bailey turns to le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy*. First, Elizabeth Worthington, later Liese, receives attention; and then, right at the end, Bailey settles upon the steering committee which receives George Smiley's report on Mr Ko.

Elizabeth Worthington is helpful because she reopens the question of multiple selves and the significance of the relation between them. "Of course", her abandoned husband explains, "kisses means nothing with her. She kisses everybody, the pupils, her girl-friends – she'd kiss the dustman, anyone." What is more, "every relationship has to be a conquest. With her child, the waiter at the restaurant... Then, when she's won them, they bore her. Naturally."

There is the question, of course – Bailey describes it as a "common-sense" one – of whether Elizabeth Worthington is sincere. He concedes that, elsewhere in le Carré's narrative, she could be loyal to those who have befriended her or have been her lovers, and that this is an equivalent of sincerity: "Tell him I kept faith", she says, "It's what he cares about most. I stuck to the deal." But sincerity is, within the terms of the account Bailey undertakes, a peripheral matter:

to be sincere, so far as the culture of persuasion is concerned, is to be judged by another person not to that kind of truth is unattainable, sometimes even for oneself.

What is critical is the mingling together of incompatible, especially those minglings that destroy the speaker's sense of trust. In Elizabeth's case, what is mingled are the moral and tactical selves. These are in principle antipathetic, yet they coexist – as it were, as "percentages" – in the mind of every politically

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motivated person. There is a puzzle here, in other words, about which minglings are perceived as abominable and which not. Whether Bailey resolves this or merely side-steps it, I was uncertain. In any event, he moves forward by drawing another distinction: that between the mentionable and the unmentionable, what is above the line and what below. In gatherings like the Carré at the committee, items from below the line have to be used, but can only be used indirectly; and it is in this deviousness, if I have followed Bailey, that the essence of the sophisticated code resides.

Winning depends, in other words, on sensitivity to local ground-rules and guile. You have to know which corners can be cut, and which not. While, as the author puts it, you can usually use a hammer to put screws into softwood, "hammering screws into hardwood is courting disaster". But what actually happens in that committee meeting about Mr Ko? Le Carré fans will know that one is never quite sure. As the television screen reminded us week after week, George Smiley is a world in which there are wooden dolls within wooden dolls, circles within circles. It is part of Le Carré's technique to leave his readers on the outside rather than inviting them in. Wilbraham and his team from the Commonwealth Office play simple-mindedly in ultra-sophisticated surroundings and are outsmarted – that much is clear. Enderby from the FO, on the other hand, is altogether more suave. "Nicely played head", he is heard to observe afterwards. Also "Pity about old Wilbraham. He'd have run India rather well".

In retrospect, it is established, too, that the fix was in; that, unless Smiley misplayed his cards, he was going to get what he needed. It is on Smiley that, as onlookers, we concentrate. He is Le Carré's hero because he pursues a vision – a meeting of minds with his opposite number in Moscow, Karla – that is more a meeting of communion than of conquest, and reminds us, perhaps too insistently, Smiley is not a virile man who carries over into committee work the drama of physical strength or potency. He is a hero of a new and singular kind, Committee Man incarnate, precisely because he is outwardly so mild, sexually so insignificant.

By implication, though, Smiley is the hero not only of Le Carré's books but of Bailey's too. In comparison, many of the other figures on which his analysis is based seem both psychologically and morally empty. Their manoeuvres – "in committee", as the lingo has it – leave a stale taste, the atmosphere of a charade maintained in the interests of some private vanity or hunger. Early on, for instance, Bailey describes a colleague, a dean in a new university and a man whom, from his description, many of us will think we recognize: A great empire-builder, he was "gifted with an unusual warmth

of personality, a rare sensitivity in his dealings with others, and a quite un-English ability to use displays of emotion – both the light and the dark emotions – to bring people to his side." He has an Achilles' heel though, "interdisciplinary studies"; and in pursuit of this vision, he seems, in Bailey's pages, scarcely a human being at all, more a wayward instrument.

The first of the worries that *The Tactical Uses of Passion* leaves in its wake is that it makes its actors seem vaguely cowardly: with the exception, that is, of characters drawn from fiction. And this is a second worry. In using material from novels as his text, Bailey anticipates difficulty, but does not quite seem to see where the difficulty lies. "Le Carré's novel is especially appropriate", he says, "because like Snow's *Search*, it is offered as a realistic novel" . . . "there is nothing unfamiliar, nothing that rings false, in what the characters do and say". He is right that the committee meeting in *The Honourable Schoolboy* does ring true. As we read, characters spring to life on the page, dialogue sparkles. But these are technical effects, part of the spell-binder's stock-in-trade. Has Le Carré ever attended such a committee meeting in person? I believe not. And are characters in real life ever as neatly stereotyped as Enderby and Wilbraham prove to be; FO smooth, Commonwealth Office rough? Le Carré has a wonderful ear for dialogue – that is to say, a wonderful gift for writing sentences that the reader will accept as

the equivalent of spontaneous utterance – but that is something quite apart from the dispassionate observation of the ethnographer. The risk is that, in using successful fiction as a source, Bailey will feed back to us stereotypes that are no less stereotypical for being reworked with unusual skill.

Despite its subtlety and erudition, the analysis of *The Tactical Uses of Passion* has a curious effect. It throws you back on your own experience of committees in a mood of doubt. Instead of new-found illumination, "Now I see it all . . .", one mutters "Yes, but . . ." It has always been easy, one might almost say untutored, to describe committees in terms of ploys and gambits, fixes and wongles. But most of us have attended at least a few that were altogether more unsettling. We each have our uneasy recollections. The one that springs to my mind is of a college council meeting in Cumbria, a long time ago, momentous in that it was a step towards major institutional change.

At this meeting, a senior fellow, not a member, had asked to address the council in person. He stood before the meeting in his sandals, tears dampening his wrinkled cheeks, reassuring the younger fellows that, despite their deep misgivings, and despite the fact that no one enjoyed them, it was our collective duty to preserve the college's traditions of dining and feasting – our duty to the college's servants who held such traditions dear. Passion was there, to be sure; and its use could well have

been in part tactical. But more important were the vividly disparate worlds of experience and value that the people in that unhappy meeting represented. The senior fellow's claim to make out of a certain eccentricity, even a self-indulgence, but the fact of his being thrust into the bowels of an institution so over the centuries, had evolved in an idiosyncratic style.

The outcome, in the short run, was that young fellows were routed. Women were allowed in twice a week as long as they did not stay to take part, where their presence might disturb the bachelor dons – not least the one who had spoken with dismay of young fellows who "hasten home to their impatient wives. Feasts were to proceed as before, with a gluttonizing in the main body of the college hall, and their wives allowed in to watch the balcony. The tide of history, however, was on the side of change. Within a year or so, the college began to go co-ed, a change that, hindsight, may or may not have proved a tears dampening his wrinkled cheeks, reassuring the younger fellows that, despite their deep misgivings, and despite the fact that no one enjoyed them, it was our collective duty to preserve the college's traditions of dining and feasting – our duty to the college's servants who held such traditions dear. Passion was there, to be sure; and its use could well have

My point in dwelling on this small drama is to illustrate what Bailey omits. Committee meetings are prime interest to social scientists, I would argue, not even as venues for ventral trichotomies, nor even for the fine grain of the sophisticated code, in which the business of life is advanced by bat-squeak. Rather, every now and again, they are the moment of reconciliation of ways of life and systems of value that are radically opposed; an arena in which new visions abrade against older ones, not necessarily worse ones.

As I finished *The Tactical Uses of Passion*, I occurred to me that there was another book about committees that Bailey might write. *Passionate Use of Tactics*, it could be called, although the reversal is perhaps a shade too clever. It would deal with the means whereby eloquently held convictions are advanced, what happens when two convictions are opposed. In such a book, strictly, far from being peripheral, becomes the heart of the matter. A satisfying performance would no longer be Enderby's "nicely played head", which a lot is achieved and nothing given away. Instead, one in which the participants are themselves in their true colours – even if, as an event, the display is fleeting, and the scenes displayed are drawn from a cupboard in which several alternatives are held in store.

Such a study would still lie squarely within Professor Bailey's parent discipline, cultural anthropology, but it would be less vulnerable to certain sorts of complaint: to the claim that in concentrating so single-mindedly on tactics he allows his actors to present themselves as hollow or stunted, and even implies that beyond tactics and manipulations, there is nothing of significance within "the culture of passion" for the social scientist to describe.

Skyrner although we do learn that Basil Fawley was extremely depressed, which explains why he was hasty to Sybil and Manuel, and that Cleese, in addition to being a consummate comic actor, is an only child, was bullied when young, went to a public school and thought girls came from another galaxy. We also learn, (because, whatever his fondness for Freud, the Oedipus Complex and the unconscious, Skyrner actually behaves like a human being and reveals a little of himself), that he came into psychiatry to help himself as much as to help others, is twice married and had a father who, if anything, was too kind.

Some of this is clearly important if we are to understand Skyrner's philosophy but precisely what it is helpful for is by no means clear. By definition, common sense is unlikely to stir anyone's pulses; parents should not indeed rush too quickly to relieve every childish discomfort; men do indeed need to be able to admit to the occasional desire to be supported and babied; parents should indeed be able to fight with each other "as long as they love each other and can get together and compromise". Who, inside or outside Skyrner's therapy group, would disagree? Those parts that are not common sense are, in the main, Skyrner's

personal opinions and they are more colorful. "So long as it's done with love and for the child's own good" may indeed seem good sense to Skyrner but it is a recipe which has justified all manner of parental mayhem; Skyrner's ruminations concerning the therapeutic benefits of belonging to some movement or group immediately provoke the, counter-argument that some ideological movements appear distinctly unhealthy to those courageous enough to withstand them. Feminists will not take me kindly to Skyrner's forthright views on the need for decisive fathers willing and able to wield authority within the family, and his assertions concerning (inborn personality differences between the sexes) may well provoke one little or not-so-little girl to behave in distinctly unladylike ways.

I think Dr Skyrner might have been advised to have resisted the blandishments of Mr Cleese and his Uncle Fred and refrained from putting down his working philosophy, whatever else we expect from the therapist, in the comic it is more than common sense. There is much to chew on between Cleese's jokes, Skyrner's aphorisms and Basil Fawley's unvoiced cartoons, as long as prospective readers don't expect too substantial a meal.

## Sensible sympathies

David Lodge

ELIZABETH HARDWICK  
*Bartleby in Manhattan and other essays*  
232pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.  
0297783572

Finding a title for a collection of occasional essays and reviews is always a delicate and difficult task. A common solution is to choose some quotation which expresses either mononymically (*The Common Pursuit*) or metaphorically (*The Well-Wrought Urn*) the general tenor of the contents. Another is to allow the title of one item to stand, synecdochically, for all. Elizabeth Hardwick has followed the latter course, but instead of being placed at the beginning of her book, as is customary, the title essay is buried deep inside, a practice more familiar in collections of poems or short stories than in works of criticism. This, however, is entirely appropriate, since she is herself a distinguished exponent of the lyrical novel, and her criticism is as strongly stamped with her own distinctive sensibility, and composed with as much care and attention to the resonances of words and the rhythm of sentences, as her prose fiction. She is, indeed, a "lyrical" critic – the nearest equivalent we have to the Virginia Woolf of *The Common Reader*: that is, a critic who is as clever and well-informed as any academic, but free to write in a more personal and relaxed style; and who is able to exercise her own expressive skills without swamping or obscuring those of the writer under discussion.

The title essay, "Bartleby in Manhattan", is a good example. Hardwick begins by candidly explaining that she took up Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" again, hoping to get from it some material for a series of lectures on the subject of New York City, only to be drawn away from the environmental theme by the strange power of the character.

Bartleby's language reveals the all of him, but what is revealed? Character? Bartleby is not a character in the manner of the usual, imaginative, fictional construction. And he is not a character as we know them in life, with their bustling bustle of details, their suits and ties and felt hats, their love affairs surreptitious or blinding, family albums, psychological justifica-

tions dragging like a little wagon along the highway of experience.

Bartleby, hired as a copyist by the tale's narrator, a genial old lawyer, disconcerts his employer by refusing to carry out at first some, then all duties, with the polite, inscrutable formula, "I would prefer not to". Impervious to threats, remonstrations and even ultimate eviction, Bartleby increasingly obsesses the lawyer as an intolerable enigma, and in a strange way, as an accusing victim for whom he feels an irrational but ineluctable responsibility. Hardwick retells this story in language that vividly conveys the power and fascination of the original, but which is very much her own. Where the academic critic would quote and paraphrase, she metaphorizes:

[Bartleby's] first utterance is like the soul escaping from the body, as in medieval drawings . . . The laconic, implacable signature is at hand, the mysterious signature that cannot be misinterpreted and cannot be misunderstood. Bartleby replies, *I would prefer not to* . . . By the singularity of refusal, the absence of "because" or of the opening up of some possibly alternating circumstance, this negative domination aizes the story like a sudden ambush in the street. Bartleby's "I" is of such a completeness that it does not require support. He preserves his "I" as if it were a visible part of the body, the way ordinary men possess a thumb.

"Bartleby" is indeed the sort of story that makes deconstructionists' mouths water, an astonishingly early assault on the conventions and assumptions of the "classic realist text" (causality, "character", closure, etc). Hardwick has perceived and communicated this quality in the text, but without having recourse to the tiresome jargon of deconstruction, or subscribing to its equally tiresome infatuation with the void. She enters with lively sympathy into the dilemma of the old lawyer, whose well-intentioned efforts to reclaim Bartleby for normality are politely rebuffed:

family life: would the pudgy, homely daughter like to comb her hair, nesten up a bit, and apply for a position as a model? – and why not, of these have, and so on.

This kind of critical discourse runs considerable risks: a very thin line separates it from the merely whimsical, the self-congratulatory or populist. But Hardwick has the tact and intelli-

gence to keep on the right side of the line. Her metaphorical embellishments and personal asides are means of giving the reader vicarious access to the text under discussion, not of thrusting the critic's sensibility and accomplishments between text and reader – unlike, say, the prose of Peter Conrad, whose *Imagining America* comes under devastating scrutiny in the last essay in this collection.

[Auden] died of a sudden heart attack in a hotel in Vienna, dispatched in Conrad's requiem ending of his chapter with "callous, merciful, American efficiency." Why callous, why merciful, why American?

Why indeed. This review carries all the more weight because Hardwick is not by nature a grudging or ungenerous critic, and much prefers to praise rather than blame. *Bartleby in Manhattan* is mainly a record of other enthusiasms and admiration for other writers – Simone Weil, Thomas Mann, Tolstoy, Melville, Ring Lardner, Thomas Hardy, Nabokov, among others (the sweep of time and space is impressive). Her negative responses, and negative rhetoric, are reserved mainly for the social, political and cultural criticism which make up a large part of this book. This, for instance, from an essay on Billy Graham and the whole phenomenon of American evangelistic religion:

Billy Graham's "ministry" and his life are circular. The circular life is concerned to defy distraction and temptation in order to return to where it stanced. Perhaps that is why Graham in his circles often sounds like the orbiting astronaut, or it may be that they sound like him.

In the latter part of this essay, Hardwick reports the experience of watching two hours of Sunday morning religious television in a series of unforgettable vignettes:

Ernest Angley, a dreadful and menacing faith healer. This dumpy little primitive in a wig specialises in screams and awful slaps to the head of sick Christians. Thump, "I command no more sugar in the

## BEYOND THE PALE Sir Oswald Mosley 1933-1980

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John Charmley, *Sunday Telegraph*

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A.J.P. Taylor, *Observer*

£8.95

Secker & Warburg

## The therapist and the comic

Anthony Clare

ROBIN SKYNER and JOHN CLEESE  
*Families: and how to survive them*  
302pp. Methuen. £8.95.  
0413326402

The more interesting experience, in John Cleese's life to date has been a therapy group with his wife and three children. In the company of nine other people he lowered his defensive barriers, endured a variety of unfamiliar emotional experiences and underwent a systematic examination of some of his most ingrained assumptions concerning personal relationships and human values. Five years later, a better man in his own eyes, however he may appear to others, he has decided that his discovery of new ways of thinking deserves to be shared with those who are likely to find them of interest but unlikely to have the need, time or inclination for therapy.

Mr Cleese's therapists were Robin Skyrner and his wife Fred. Dr Skyrner is a psychotherapist who once specialised in family therapy at the Maudsley Hospital, and in my time there

he was affectionately regarded as someone who avoided psychiatric jargon and expressed forthright views about family relationships and roles. When Cleese suggested that the fruits of their collective therapeutic enterprise might usefully be disseminated in book form, Skyrner agreed although, as we learn in the introduction, his decision owed more to his Uncle Fred, who had once remarked of an earlier book by his nephew that it was the sort of book that made the reader realise that "it is all common sense".

The problem with *Families: and how to survive them* is that many readers will reach the same conclusions as Cleese and Skyrner without undergoing the rigours of finishing the book. The very opening question (the format is question and answer with Cleese asking very bright questions and making very assured answers and making somewhat better gags) is a mixture of common sense, conjecture, anecdotal rumination and personal prejudice which provides the atmosphere and foundation for all that is to come. We do not learn very much about what it was that brought Cleese to Dr



Mezzotint by W. Pether from Joseph Wright of Derby's "Drawing from the Gladiator", which was sold at Christie's at their sale of fine Decorative, Sporting and Topographical Prints last Tuesday.

for a while



# Windings and conchings

Peter Redgrove

TED HUGHES

River  
With photographs by Peter Keen  
128pp. Faber. £10 (paperback, £4.95).  
0571 130887

KEITH SAGAR (Editor)  
The Achievement of Ted Hughes  
377pp. Manchester University Press. £27.50.  
0750 0889

Water is one of those substances that seem to take care of us, to guarantee human significance in the physical world. It appears to have both mental and physical properties, like numbers or breath. Evolution would not have been possible without water, with its high latent heat guaranteeing against lethal extremes of temperature, and its curious and unique property of becoming lighter when it is cold (otherwise the seas would freeze solid). Its windings and conchings reproduce the organic forms out of which the mineral, plant and animal worlds are constructed; it is the working-fluid of the sun-earth heat-engine; and it is a kind of liquid crystal whose properties alter with the approach of gravitational fields such as the Moon's. One can see its function teleologically, as if transmitting cosmic influences to the living world. Writing about water must be, then, one of the great reconciling meditations.

In reading Ted Hughes's *River* I am reminded of all this, and of a story by, I think, Richard Brautigan, about a scrap-metal yard with a stream of special water running through it, the property of which was to reflect images of all the events and places it had passed through. I was reminded also of Henri Michaux, in *Au Pays de la Magie* (1941), and his magical Water-Shepherds, and of Ruskin's *Stones* (1859). There is a kind of

Hughes in the farming poems in *Moorhown* was able to reconcile his sharp observation of the external world with his mythical and philosophical strain, though on the whole it was an uneasy book, interested in pain, troubled because it dealt in part with the death of Hughes's admired partner and father-in-law Jack Orchard (the "good shepherd" of an excellent essay on *Moorhown* by Craig Robinson in *The Achievement of Ted Hughes*). *River*, however, moves towards something I have been anticipating and hoping for since Crow went hunting Hare, and lost the magical battle ("Crow Goes Hunting"). As John Layard has shown in *The Lady of the Hare*, this animal, in contradistinction to the fighting, fumbling Crow, all over the world stands for the relenting and feminine aspects of nature, the willing sacrifice, the creature that never closes its eyes, and whose reputation as a witch animal and for uncleanness comes from its identification, like water and blood, with the Moon. Crow thought Hare the greater power, and "gazed after the bounding hare / Speechless with admiration."

In *River* the method of exploration is important. It is a tentative, vulnerable feeling-out, like waking up out of sleep. In "October Dawn" in Hughes's first book, ice, "got its spearhead into place" in a half-glass of wine: "First a skin, delicately here / Restraining a ripple from the air; / Soon plate and rivet on pond and brook." In *River* it is like the reverse transformation. "The Morning Before Christmas" begins with frozen "Buds fur-gloved with frost" a "standstill" and a "stillness" in a "blue haze". Then at mid-morning the sun pushes "dark spokes of melt and sparkle" across the fields, the water wakes and the river steams showing its colour "mint-olive". Now there are close-ups of dead salmon: "lolling lilacs of fungus". Nothing so raggy dead offal as a dead salmon in its wedding finery! But quickly there is a ban fish "purchasing alive", and the sun "embellishes her beauty? Her red-black love-paints, her helpless noble mask", the mask of sacrifice. Men appear, the "solent" regulators of nature, and squeeze the eggs out of the hen fish and the milk out of a surviving pook-salmon: "precarious obstetrics", and the fish go free. Nature would not be so abundant without the men's careful husbandry, and as a consequence of this act the world is now "wrought in wet,

heavy gold. Treasure-solid." Cell-shocked: "That morning / Dazzle-stamped every cell in my body". A thought-fox must preside: "A flood pond, inch-iced, held the moment of a fox / In touch-melted and refrozen dot-prints." Something spoilt and frozen is redeemed by the magic of animal husbandry, which is also a kind of science.

The pattern repeats as we read through the book: a waking, and some act of perception which transforms. In "Japanese River Tales" snow in the night hurries like a bride to her river-groom, who "rejoices all morning / In his juicy bride"; unfortunately this is daytime magic, her destroying talons are "lengthened by moonlight". And the river / Is a gutter of death". Or, as in "Flesh of Light", one may start with an abstract proposition, the sun being the generator of radiation which makes the atom dance on earth, and proceed to waking and dripping that same radiant light of which both their bodies and the shining "mercury creature" of the river are made. This comparison of the river to mercury recurs, as though the shining water were at the same time the alchemical Mercurius, the living imagination.

In "Whiteness" the waking is disorderly and restless, until the sun establishes itself; in "Four March Watercolours" the river, at first much occupied with "twistings and self-twistings", progressively organizes itself into "river-epic". If the hills remain "locked in snow", like dry dugs refusing their springs, the eye nevertheless wakes to "lit queenliness". / The high, frozen bosom, wears this river / Like a particularly fine jewel" ("Dee").

In some expositions, it is as though the skin of water separated the narrator from participation in the thriving depths, and once penetrated, all is changed. "The Merry Mink" stops being a magical star and romps and topples into the river. In "Under the Hill of the Captains", the poet, in a kind of "poetic vision", does their work, which is also a "stag-party". "In the clatter of the light loom of water / All singing and / Toiling together / Wreathing their metals" and their work-song is imagined. We "Join water, wade in underbelly" in "Go Fishing" and in "Milesian Encounter on the Sligachan" there is the spontaneous shock of falling into the "sheer cavern of current piling silence". Such a brilliant cut-glass interior through the raddled surface of a bog. Some mythic parables supervene, of "Ophelia" and "Creation of Fishes" (the Moon's children, saved from the parching sun, by a sleight) and in "West Dart" the sudden eruption of torrents without preliminary warning breaks what has hitherto been the pattern of most of the poem.

Now the fish watch the poet through their skins, and the whole river whispers "We've got him" ("After Moonless Midnight"). Just about half-way through the book, in "That Morning", in a country where there are bears "Two

gold bears came down and swam like men . . . And dived like children. / And stood in deep water as on a throne / Eating pierced salmon off their talons . . .". It is as if the poet is declaring after his explorations that the seeing eye, like the Hare's, is now open for always, for after that point the poems enact and record confident vision, freely entered: "So we stood, alive in the river of light / among the creatures of light, creatures of light."

There is more religious imagery, in the title-poem explicitly, of the willing sacrifice, the softness of the water of the Tao, which, yielding to everything, conquers everything: "Su the river is a god / Knee-deep among reeds, watching men, / Or hung by the icicles down the door of a dam", like the Hanged Man in the Tarot, and one notices the word-play on "dam". But the river can also have the softness of an idle woman who stretches and "an ecstasy tightens / Over her skin, and deep in her gold body / Thrills spasm and dissolve", for this "Low Water" is also a "love-potion" across which Hare eyes Crow "steadily from the beginning of the world."

There is a lot more to say about the poems, but not now. To my eye, the photographs are not of the same interest, and present an embalmed or chocolate-box appearance; they are not awake.

The Achievement of Ted Hughes is also distracting, in a not dissimilar manner. People who prefer to read a poet because he is marked down as "great", rather than because they find him good, will receive an excellent message here, as most of the essays seem to take the standpoint that Hughes can do no wrong, a declaration contradicted by the long section of uncollected poems, which are naturally uneven in quality. The editor, Keith Sagar, says right at the beginning that Hughes's is "the most penetrating, authentic and all-embracing poetic vision of our time". I have considerable

whether he really means what he says. What is the part of "our time"? Does he mean, in any language? Should we confine "poetic vision" to literature, and if so, why?

But enthusiasm about Hughes is justified. He has helped bring back into English studies in this country a sense of poetry "not as a vague ornament of life but as one of the great living disciplines of the mind, friendly to all other disciplines, and offering them and accepting from them new sources of power". These words are Elizabeth Sewall's, from *The Orphic Voice*, a book not cited here, but which would be of considerable interest to the contributors if they don't already know it. Indeed, it is one of this book's shortcomings that in speaking of shamanism and other religious matters, Hughes is not placed in his full European context. So to place him would be very interesting, for he is obviously not the first poet of "our time" to quarrel with the Christian Church, or to suffer from a Crow-like conflict between apolitical and ideal, horror and ecstasy, supernaturalism and irony. Besides Baudelaire, one immediately thinks of Rimbaud.

## Coombe

The secrecy of this coombe is weighted through

With the pressures of the land that does not show

Over its ridge - the massing of the moors,

The withstanding cliff and the inland sweep

And drop whose encompassing granite hand

Extends us the deep lines of its palm

Through softer soils that a river

Silvers and darkens between. Climb

To the crest and the river has lost itself

Down in the leafed-round dip and now

Dartmoor is shouldering up against the sky

In stone-age pastures and the silence

It kept from the Romans with. In a buzzard's eye

It might all lie one map, but we

Take in our territory by inches then by bursts.

More like that heron who stands, advances, stands

Firm in the sliding Torridge that divides

The sheet of the woodslope from the packed cornland.

CHARLES TOMLINSON



John Cottingham

RICHARD B. CARTER  
Descartes' Medical Philosophy: The Organic Solution to the Mind-Body Problem  
301pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.  
£21.25.  
0801 2894 5  
THOMAS M. LENNON, JOHN M. NICHOLAS and JOHN W. DAVIS (Editors)  
Problems of Cartesianism  
233pp. Kingston and Montreal: McGill/Queen's University Press. £28.25.  
0753 10001

Descartes, as every first-year philosophy student knows, regarded the mind as essentially non-physical. "I recognized", he reports in the *Discourse*, "that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think and which, in order to exist, needs no place and depends on no material thing." By insisting on the essential non-corporeality of the mind, Descartes bequeathed to philosophy the so-called "mind-body problem": if the mind is non-corporeal, how can it affect and be affected by the body with which it is united? Richard B. Carter's "organic solution" is quite revolutionary: Descartes, it seems, held a kind of mind-brain correspondence theory: "All psychic activities of which we have any awareness are, for Descartes, somehow associated with uniquely corresponding corporeal activities."

But can everyone really have misunderstood Descartes so persistently? In fact, it is Profes-

## Versions of realism

David Smith

JOHN I. JENKINS  
Understanding Locke: An Introduction to Philosophy through John Locke's Essay  
256pp. Edinburgh University Press. £15 (paperback, £7.50).  
085224428  
J.S. WOOLHOUSE  
Locke  
198pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.  
07108 04679

John Locke is a particularly interesting figure for present-day philosophers, who are working in a period dominated by a revolt against the neo-Humanist positivism that has characterized so much philosophical work this century. Although this revolt was partly inspired by the later work of Wittgenstein, perhaps the principal motive force came from the United States, where it was chiefly embodied in developments in and related to the philosophy of science. Increasingly, philosophers felt impelled to take the findings and speculations of the scientist with the ontological seriousness definitive of realism; and together with this went a rejection of those positivist accounts of thought, perception and meaning that led indirectly to an anti-realist emphasis on raw balance between four functions, including intellect. The anguished negotiations are between three of these functions and the "inferior" or undifferentiated or deep function which I believe to be "sensation", dislodging our culture, the life in the physical world of the fully sensuous body. As Wallace Stevens put it: "The greatest poverty is not to live / In a physical world . . . / The adventurer / In a humanly not conceived of a race / Completely physical a physical world."

I take *River* to be an adventure into or working model of such negotiations, like thinking feeling and intuiting by things, which leads when successful, to the fifth function, which is the "treasure-solid" imagination. But in *River* "good" - "good" as Blake, as Shakespeare (for these comparisons are implied in Sagar's book) is *River* "worthy" of the most "embracing poetic vision" of our time. Dr Sagar's editorial policy will want it to be, thus confuses the issue. *River* will take away all of its readers much further into imagination with the four-fold taste of reality, and making it their own, "dazzle-stamped", they could go unassisted, and this is perhaps one of the principal "great" things about it of any poet of our time.

sor Carter who has misunderstood. The main evidence he produces for his interpretation is the claim that Descartes regards ideas as corporeal; for in the 1633 *Treatise on Man* he describes the impressing of ideas in the imagination of a soulless robot, and "if robots have ideas", Carter observes, "ideas are no less material than the robots are". But this ignores a crucial distinction. In a letter to Mersenne of July 1641, Descartes explicitly distinguishes between ideas which involve an image and belong to the imagination (which faculty Descartes indeed regards as requiring a brain), and those which are ideas of "pure mind" (*pur esprit*). There is no evidence that Descartes regards these latter ideas as corporeal (the definition of "idea" in the *Second Replies*, which Carter takes to support his view, in fact reinforces the distinction between corporeal and non-corporeal ideas).

Carter proceeds to attribute to Descartes the view that "the mind is capable of perceiving only what comes to it as a result of the action of matter". But there is a serious muddle here about "perceive". If "perceive" means "perceive through the senses" (Latin *sensire*), then it is true that Descartes analyses this activity in terms of the mind's adverting to material events in the brain. But if by "perception" is meant that mental vision for which Descartes reserves the Latin verb *percipere* - for example, the "clear and distinct" perception which we have of mathematical notions - then no corporeal activities whatever are involved.

Too much emphasis, Carter believes, has been placed on Descartes's metaphysical writ-

problem derives from the fact that Jenkins intends his commentary on Locke's *Essay* to serve as "an introduction to philosophy"; but I

level philosophy need be quite as uninteresting as Jenkins makes it. Although he is, by and large, a sympathetic commentator, Jenkins repeatedly trivializes Locke's concerns. In the discussion of perception he fails to bring out Locke's central concern with the intentionality of mental states and the adequacy of our representations of the world; he fails to get across the enormous importance of Locke's discussion of "natural kind" terms; and no one reading this book could really be expected to understand the fundamental issues involved in the seventeenth-century debate over innate ideas. Although Jenkins does succeed in clearly presenting some of the "problems of philosophy", both the criticisms and defences of his subject are in general lightweight and superficial. Locke was a much more substantial and interesting philosopher than the figure who emerges from the pages of this book.

Woolhouse's book is a very different piece of work. He does not approach Locke's text in search of philosophical problems, but is concerned primarily to understand it as it was originally meant, which requires, of course, a reading of Locke in relation to the more influential philosophical positions of his contemporaries and predecessors. In fact, Woolhouse's book is the first in a new series called "Philosophers in Context", and he is admirably competent to write such a work. Knowledge of seventeenth-century ideas has progressed rapidly over the last couple of decades, and Woolhouse is fully informed of these developments. Although there is little that is wholly original in this book, I cannot think of a more accessible faithful delineation of Locke's thought. In particular, Woolhouse clearly perceives the central thrust of Locke's philosophical project and traces its ramifications with great clarity through the *Essay*. One result of his approach, as Woolhouse himself recognizes, is an absence of discussion of a number of philosophical topics often discussed in relation to Locke. But, after all, Locke was very interested in the "problem of perception" or philosophical logic. One would, perhaps, have wished ideally for more extended discussion of certain issues; but the book is obviously intended as an introduction to Locke's thought, and as such it could hardly have been bettered. If Woolhouse's book is an accurate indication of the general standard of this new series, we can look forward with pleasure to the forthcoming volumes.

# Ideas of disembodiment

John Cottingham

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ings, at the expense of his "psychobiological" works like the *Passions of the Soul*; here, we are told, acts of will are treated "under the heading of things excited in the soul by corporeal motion in the brain", and this shows "the way in which even doubt and conception in the soul can be seen as radically dependent on the body for their definition". Again, this is all wrong. Volitions, though extensively discussed by Descartes as actions of the soul not passions; their cause "proceeds directly from the soul and depends on it alone". Some volitions terminate in the body (eg. the desire to raise an arm); but others (eg. the desire to love God) terminate in the soul, in which case Descartes insists - perhaps misguidedly but none the less clearly and unambiguously - that they are from start to finish non-corporeal.

The parts of the book which are not occupied with travestying Descartes's theory of the mind expound his "radically based ethics". Cartesian ethics is a celebrated non-subject: *la morale* is mentioned, alongside mechanics and medicine, as one of the branches of Descartes's famous tree of knowledge, but apart from some fairly conventional advice to the Princess Elizabeth, he seemed to have little to offer in the way of a systematic moral philosophy. For Carter, however, "Descartes . . . is the father of a cosmology that gave us a view of general nature that could provide a heavenly paradigm to the citizens of a progressive and liberal state." Later commentators, we are told, have ignored "the vast cosmological horizons of the foundations of the Enlightenment's new theory of the correct, scientifically defensible way in which humans should relate to one another". If future commentators are inspired to investigate such "horizons of foundations", it is hoped that they will improve on Carter's prose style.

*Problems of Cartesianism* is the first volume

of a projected series of McGill/Queen's Studies in the History of Ideas, under the general editorship of Richard Popkin. Philosophers sometimes (less often nowadays) dismiss the history of ideas as "mere exegesis"; but the essays in this collection show that it can afford rich scope for complex argument and counter-argument, though the subject-matter, for the most part, is concerned with trends, influences and sources, rather than philosophical analysis. Topics discussed include the impact of Descartes's cosmogony on early modern scientific thinking; the Cartesian challenge to biblical criticism; and the problems which Descartes and his followers faced over the doctrine of the transubstantiation. A masterly study by Allen Gabbey unfolds Henry More's reactions to Cartesian philosophy, from his eager eulogy in 1646 of "that sublime and subtil Mechanick Des-Chartes", to his frenzied denunciation in 1668 of the Cartesians as "Nullists [Nowheremen] . . . who, forsooth, imagine themselves so superlatively Intellectual above other men, in declaring that God is no-where, though they cannot deny but that he is".

"Descartes may be called the founder of the modern epistemological utopia", writes Leszek Kolakowski in the Tanner Lecture on Human Values delivered at the Australian National University on June 22, 1982, "The Death of Utopia Reconsidered", and goes on to discuss the anti-utopian arguments that have dominated modern philosophy (with the major exception of Husserl) and whether they have resulted in a net gain. The lecture is the last of six published in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values: Volume Four, 1983*, edited by Sterling M. McMurrin (254pp. Cambridge University Press. £25. 0 521 25749 2), others include "The Voluntary Society" by Kingman Brewster and "Ethics, Law, and the Exercise of Self-Command" by Thomas C. Schelling.

## November Books

### Non-Fiction

#### BETWEEN A COUNTRY

Frank Delaney

Based on long conversations with the poet Laureate, the author has constructed an affectionate travelogue through the places of his poetry and prose. Illustrated £8.95  
Co-published with John Murray.

### OUTBACK

Thomas Keneally

In vivid character-sketches and anecdotes, the winner of the 1982 Booker Prize, avokes, with stunning colour photographs, the strange and empty heartland of Australia. Illustrated £12.95

### TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

Ranulph Fiennes

That truly remarkable story of the first circum-polar journey round the earth which was described by the expedition's patron, HRH The Prince of Wales, as 'Mad but Marvellous'. Illustrated £12.95

### UP AND UNDER: A Rugby Diary

Frank Keating

Foreword by Neil Kinnock MP  
An enthusiastic celebration of international rugby and those who play it. Illustrated £9.95

### THE CORNISH LANDSCAPE

W.G. V. Balchin

A thoroughly revised and expanded version of one of the founding volumes of the Making of the English Landscape series, first published in 1964 and unavailable for over 15 years. Illustrated £7.95

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#### MONSIEUR PAMPLEMOUSSE

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Danielle Steel

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### MALICE IN CAMERA

Laurence Payne

Elstree film studio is the setting for his second novel featuring Mark Savage - an unwelcome phone call in the middle of the night lures the ex-film star back to the scene of his former triumphs. £8.95

Hodder & Stoughton



# All-nuclear

Laurence Martin

PAUL BUTEUX  
The Politics of Nuclear Consultation in NATO  
1965-1980  
292pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.  
0521 24798 5

The content of Paul Buteux's book is rather narrower than his title suggests, for it is essentially a history of the Nuclear Planning Group in NATO. To that is added an extremely helpful description of the actual mechanisms of nuclear control within NATO and a very fair, balanced and brief survey of the strategic issues involved in the debate over theatre nuclear weapons. The story is a detailed reminder that this debate has been absorbing the alliance now for over a quarter of a century and that it would consequently be naive to expect a resolution of the issues in the near future. They are much more likely to be recycled once again and we can at least find consolation by reflecting that so long as this abortive process continues, the alliance is serving its purpose.

It was no accident that the foundation of the Nuclear Planning Group in April 1967 virtually coincided with the formal adoption by NATO of the strategy of flexible response in December of that year. The essence of flexible response is ambiguity and, as Mr Buteux well shows, the NPG has been an instrument for keeping the ambiguity within the limits of mutual tolerance.

The basis of the Atlantic alliance is the redress of the European balance by American power and, while it is an error to believe that this power and the consequent dominance of the United States within the alliance are solely end it was realized that it was not enough, to have nuclear weapons and announce a guarantee, it has been impossible to avoid

awkward questions about what would happen if the forces and strategy for employment should be maintained for that dreadful day.

Buteux shows us once more that there is no definitive answer to these questions. There are at least two reasons for this. In the first place, the context of the questions keeps changing, as, for instance, the recent energetic Soviet effort to fill the erstwhile "theatre-nuclear" gap in their armoury has cast doubt on the adequacy of NATO's own provision to bridge that gap, and thereby given rise to our current agonizing over cruise missiles and Pershings. Second, and more fundamentally, the potential consequences of nuclear war and the wide geographical separation of Europe and the United States make it impossible that the interests of the Europeans and Americans, however similar, should actually coincide at all points in the strategic debate. The task is therefore to find words and a pattern of forces and plans that are not intolerable to any ally and any sufficiently coherent to give pause to the Soviet Union.

Efforts to get the answers too clear are normally counterproductive. This has been especially true of attempts to build mutual confidence on "hardware" solutions: Buteux reminds us that the NPG itself grew directly out of the abortive plans for a Multilateral Nuclear Force and we see something of the same today in the move towards "dual key". As Buteux points out, the United States can in any case wage nuclear war unilaterally with weapons far beyond anyone else's control. It is scarcely likely that if the Soviet Union feared such an attack was imminent and was tempted to take pre-emptive action, it would spare the cruise missiles merely in the hope that the United Kingdom would not cooperate with the United States on that day. The NPG, and its extensions the High Level Group, the Special Group and now the Special Consultative Group, have and ensure that the outcome is compatible with European interests.

In providing a conduit for information, in reinforcing the American obligation and, indeed, inclination to consult, and in relieving European anxieties at least to the point at which they feel they have done all they can to control events, the NPG seems to have been a considerable success, in no small part by creating an atmosphere of routine that defuses transient crises of confidence. Of course its role should not be overrated: it is only natural that a book devoted to this institution should sometimes induce such a distortion and we need to realize that, had this device not been invented, no doubt some other mechanism would have sufficed. Moreover, the NPG could only handle a limited range of issues and to a limited degree; once that range and degree were exceeded, the debate split out into the more fragmented multilateral and bilateral jockeying we see over the cruise missile and Pershing. It is here that Buteux's failure to live up to the title of his book is most apparent, for the "politics" of the issues, the domestic strains, and the other, non-military sources of Allied friction and solidarity that provide the context of the nuclear debate are scarcely treated at all.

A minor thread in Buteux's book, to which he himself pays relatively little attention, is of particular interest in Britain today, though readers will vary widely in the moral they draw. This thread is the role of the independent European nuclear forces. As this history re-

calls, the difficult task of the NATO Europeans is to keep the American deterrent credibly harnessed to their security on acceptable terms. In this respect it is useful to be reminded that the process of consultation and mutual accommodation represented by the NPG began as an alternative to the MLF and that the MLF itself was an effort to forestall any German nuclear ambitions. If the United States ever decided to resolve some of its major strategic dilemmas by washing its hands of NATO, Europe's own nuclear potential might provide the only remaining alternative to Soviet domination.

Most Europeans would regard such a contingency as regrettable, dangerous and very probably unmanageable. But running through Buteux's story, if only by implication, is the theme that preventing Europe's nuclear potential from being realized in dangerous ways is one of the major interests impelling the United States to underwrite European security. Could this interest survive the demise of the existing European nuclear forces? Soviet efforts to drag those forces into the arms control negotiations may soon force us to confront the paradoxes this and other questions pose for European nuclear policy. Those with the patience to follow Buteux's painstaking narrative will emerge pretty well equipped for the complex debate that is doubtless before us.

## At the sharp end

Geoffrey Best

HEW STRACHAN  
European Armies and the Conduct of War  
224pp. Allen and Unwin. £15 (paperback), £6.95.

The universal acknowledgment of the truth that the only way to ensure that the world's generals has no doubt emboldened civilians to write about it as much as nowadays they do. In principle, there seems to be nothing wrong or unscientific about this. Why should civilians who have never been in a war be expected to refrain from writing about it any more than soldiers who have never been in one (as most German soldiers in 1914 had not, Hew Strachan reminds us) are expected to refrain from baying a go at it?

But the civilian entry into war studies may have brought losses as well as gains with it. The civilian may be intensely interested in everything that can come under the "War and Society" umbrella, increasingly fashionable since Arthur Marwick and his Open University history-men opened it up fifteen years or so ago. He is more likely to see deeper into the relations of war and politics than most purportedly e-political generals could ever do. But he is also unlikely to care of even, unless something of a *millière manqué*, to understand as much about the actual fighting itself, which is, after all, where the ultimately decisive things happen. Ethics, law, supply, economic foundations, political frameworks, sociological sources and consequences... such aspects have become brightly illuminated; somewhat to the detriment, argues Dr Strachan, of tactical and operational problems and solutions; on imbalance and disconnection which he here sets out to redress.

Obviously a good-natured man as well as an able, wide-minded scholar, and with some benefit, one supposes, from a spell at Sandhurst before his present Cambridge work, Strachan wastes no time on polemics or nit-picking. The Guides to Further Reading which follow each chapter recommend the better (English-language) books and simply omit mention of the worse; his historical appraisals in the main text of the better-known theorists of war are thrown and strong but never disrespectful, suggesting an attractive measure of tolerance of the weaknesses to which even superior flesh is subject, as well as a brooding sense of the tragic undertow of his theme.

The importance to him of those theorists (the usual list, but coming right up to Buchan and Brodie, Wohltetter, Kissinger and Co) is less their intellectual brilliance (some were not so smart) than their celebrity and influence in their own age or subsequently as acknow-

ledged pundits: men with sufficiently olympic views as well as with enough practical knowledge of war to offer plausible and persuasive accounts of how all the available means of making war could best be used to achieve the ends their readers would think worth pursuing.

But the theorists are only part of Strachan's story. He is equally concerned on the one hand with the great practical innovators - Marlborough, Frederick and Napoleon, Moltke and Sherman, De Gaulle, Guderian and Tukhachevsky and so on - who discovered new means and combinations of using the men and equipment at their disposal, and on the other with the great technical innovations which provided some of that equipment: eg, ship, aircraft, breech-loaders, tanks, monoplane fighters, The Bomb. A tremendous amount of learning can be sensed between and beneath this book's lines as well as found lucidly in them as the author proceeds by forced marches through the years, persistently putting his troublesome questions: how did the leaders of military thought and action at that time think fit to use their men and weapons, given their scales of human values, their economic and social resources, and their political purposes? Infantry tactics and weapons-procurement at one end, *Welpolitik* and *Weltanschauung* at the other, similarly ambitious books have been written before, as Strachan generously points out, but his addition to the literature certainly has this justification among others, that no one better goes on "at the sharp end".

In such a study as this, involving rapid technical and professional matter not normally familiar to the common reader, one keeps a sharpened eye open for the author's handling of military vocabulary. Will this *interpose* any sort of barrier to understanding? Hardly at all, I am glad to say. Strachan is blessedly pellucid almost all the time. Only once or twice driven to exclaim, and that was by the *obscure* "rubber obturator" on page 113. *Obturator*, indeed!

Pressed to judge which is the best chapter, I would point either to that on Clausewitz and the progressive misinterpretations to which he was subjected in Germany, France and Britain, or to the chapter on "The Revolution in Strategy" since 1945; remarkable exercises in both lucid and terse exposition, and the latter incidentally to be recommended to any one moved to find out what precisely the nuclear-armed powers have proposed to do with their dreadful darts, and why the Soviet Union's approach to them, a consistent part of its approach to the idea of war itself, is so different from that of the United States. The index is adequate, the Select Bibliography extensive. The battle and campaign maps are so-so - but when are such maps anything else?

# Freedom and the collective

José Harris

W.H. GREENLEAF  
The British Political Tradition:  
Volume 1, The Rise of Collectivism  
336pp. £22.  
0416 15370 7  
Volume 2, The Ideological Heritage  
378pp. £26.  
0416 34660 X  
Methuen

Politicians and political theorists tend to divide into those who see society as a jungle and those who see it as a zoo. The central theme of *The British Political Tradition* is the prolonged duel between those two visions that has been fought in British institutions and intellectual history over the past hundred and fifty years. Few will be surprised by the author's claim that on the whole the zoo-keepers have had the best of it; but many readers may take issue with him about why and how this has occurred. Of the two volumes reviewed here (to be followed by two more as yet unpublished), the first deals with the historical circumstances that have made possible the expansion of state and bureaucratic controls. The second deals with the ideological tensions between support for collectivism and support for libertarianism (often co-existing in the same political movements and even in the same persons) that has prevailed since the early 1800s down to the present day.

Of the two, I found the first volume, *The Rise of Collectivism*, much the less interesting and convincing. W. H. Greenleaf self-confessedly aspires to emulate A. V. Dicey; but as an analyst of long-term historical change he lacks both Dicey's genius for fashioning a wood out of a mass of unpromising trees and his illuminating flashes of inspired bigotry. The book gets off to a slow and turgid start, with much elaboration of footnotes to illustrate rather ob-

growth of the state are a light touch. A new number: the impact of war; the rise of industry; the introduction of mass democracy; the spread of "scientific" theories of knowledge; and an upsurge of Christian, humanitarian and socialist indignation which first drew attention to social evils and then demanded their amelioration by central and local government. Parts of this analysis seem irrefutable: wars or the willingness to fight them are after all what states are for. But other parts seem either oversimplified or simply wrong. To take some obvious examples: industrialization, whilst undoubtedly in some circumstances provoking state expansion, has also acted as a powerful solvent of the mercantilist forms of state intervention prevalent in the pre-industrial age. An exaggerated belief in "scientism" is at least as marked in most classical and neo-classical models of economic behaviour as in the theories of interventionists. Mass democracy, whilst doubtless in some circumstances opting for collectivism, in other circumstances seems to be compatible with a high degree of libertarianism (as in many areas of public life in the United States). Even in Britain the equation between a mass electorate and the growth of public welfare programmes is by no means self-evident. After a century of statistics about the distribution of wealth and incomes, what is perhaps surprising about most working-class voters is not that they demand so much but that they demand so little. Certainly their expectations of government pale into insignificance when compared with the "hand in the till" prospect of the eighteenth-century British aristocracy. The role of "Christian-inspired philanthropy" seems equally problematic, seeing that Christians had been under a duty to love their neighbours for at least nineteen centuries before they thought of doing so through the medium of a welfare state. The mutation of philanthropy into collectivism surely begs the question which Professor Greenleaf wants to answer: it is part of the problem which it is being called upon to explain.

Other important possible causes of modern state intervention receive scant attention - such as the growth and concentration of population, changing family structure, and the corporate self-interest of administrators and of the "leading professions". Moreover, the polarisation between interventionism and non-interventionism seems to be a much more recent phenomenon than Greenleaf's theme is a fascinating one, and

tion seems to be much exaggerated: it is not difficult to think of examples (such as the Dalek-like self-replication of modern suburban high streets) in which the interests of planners and of free-marketsters appear to march hand in hand. Indeed, it would not be implausible to argue that the growth of the collectivist state has been largely caused by the growth of the free market - by the latter's erosion of the stable communities, charitable relationships and self-governing voluntary organizations on which the minimal state relied. Certainly it was the international free market in food (and not, as Greenleaf imagines, progressive Liberal death duties) that broke the mould of agricultural patriarchy which he sees as the keystone of pre-collectivist social life. Finally, one may perhaps question whether the traffic between individualism and collectivism has been all one way. The current market in sexual and private relationships must be "freer" than at any time since the fall of Babylon. Recurrent demands for an incomes policy, which Greenleaf cites as a touchstone of state paternalism, must be set against the fact that, in the face of intransigence from

he successfully persuades the reader to take seriously many individuals and lines of argument that do not figure prominently in more conventional discussions of modern British history. He provides a useful summary of the political thought of some major figures in English public life, and at the same time rescues from obscurity such once-notable polemicists as Lord Elcho, Anthony Ludovici and Ernest Benn. Attention is drawn to some of the latent contradictions within each of the major political traditions - notably the conflict within socialism between planning and free collective bargaining, and the conflict within liberalism between those who see freedom as want-satisfaction and those who see it as duty-fulfilment.

Perhaps the best section in the book is that on Conservative thought and the recurrent tensions between Tory patriarchalism and "financiers", "speculators" and "carpet-baggers" "creeping into the fold". Conservative pretensions to being a party "without ideology" are given short shrift - though Greenleaf maintains that the essence of Conservative philosophy is to articulate what people think already rather than the invention of new ideas. There are



The Prince of Wales visiting miners' wives and children in the North-east, 1919. From those who were there. A photographic album of daily life in Britain 1919-1939 (231pp. Dent. £10.95. 0460 04597 0).

workers who know their market-value, such policies have rarely been enacted and have always failed.

All these reservations meant that I moved on to the quarter of a million words still to come in *The Ideological Heritage* with flagging enthusiasm. However, in this second volume Dicey pace quickens and the plot thickens. Greenleaf here sets himself the task of showing that no single political tradition has had a monopoly of collectivist or individualist values. Whatever current apologists may claim to the contrary, the liberal, conservative and socialist lineages in English public life have all had their iron-fisted authoritarianism, their solipsistic libertarianism and their earnest seekers after a modest and viable middle way. From Herbert Spencer to Beveridge, from the Webbs to Tony Benn, from Disraeli to Mrs Thatcher - within each tradition ideals of national efficiency have struggled with ideals of human diversity, and visions of the state as the most advanced social organism have competed with visions of the state as a mere residual keeper of the peace.

Between the three traditions there has been much convergence, overlapping and interchange of principles - hence "liberal Toryism", "stealing the Whigs' clothing", "Lib-Labism", "progressivism", "Butskellism", and, most notably, the long process of mutual interpenetration whereby Conservatives have become the heirs of Manchester liberalism, Labour the party of autarky and protectionism. Clearly the Tories have been no less susceptible than Labour to the insidious pressures of "entryism" (a process traceable back to the 1690s and the crossing over of Robert Harley's Country Whigs). In all three traditions there has been a long-standing underground movement of moles burrowing away against the varieties of state power. Libertarianism makes strange bedfellows, and this movement has ranged from tax-resisting Tory squires through syndicalist shop-atewards, from hard-nosed entrepreneurs through to utopian communists, from Anglican and Catholic medievalists through to Norzickian professors of law who believed that all social evils could be remedied by private actions in contract and tort.

Greenleaf's theme is a fascinating one, and

some gaps in his discussion of recent scholarship (no mention, for instance, of John A. Hobson's theory of "organic surplus value", which provided a powerful rationale for liberal progressive programmes of redistributive taxation). But overall, Greenleaf's references and footnotes are a valuable guide to past scholarship and to future lines of research. Recent graduates to search of untitled ground for a doctoral thesis might do worse than use him as a guide.

Nevertheless, *The Ideological Heritage* aspires not merely to be a work of reference and scholarship but to change our understanding of political reality, past, present and to come. From this point of view it seems to me deficient in several respects. One major problem is that the relationship between political thought and the central historical theme of the eclipse of individualism by collectivism is never adequately discussed. Greenleaf convinces one that "thinking about" the rise of collectivism has been an important part of recent British culture; but he does not demonstrate that ideas have been of any significance to either restraining collectivism or bringing it about. A second objection is that he too often lapses into name-dropping rather than systematic analysis: we learn, for instance, that he thinks Tony Benn is mainly significant as a follower of John Stuart Mill, but we are never told why.

Much of the book is devoted simply to chronicling what people thought rather than to subjecting their thought to systematic analysis. Much detail is added to our knowledge of the already fairly familiar individualism/collectivism dichotomy, but little is added to our understanding of conceptual issues. Where a critical stance is adopted it often tells us more about the author than about the thinker under review; we learn, for instance, that Tynney's work "was much overpraised and contained a notable element of meanness", though no reasons for this view are given. Moreover, for all its length the book contains some surprising gaps: there is no single reference to Popper or to Popper's attack on the logical basis of theories of planning; F. A. Hayek is described as the most profound analyst of libertarianism

since Herbert Spencer; but explication of Hayek's ideas is conspicuously absent. There is no mention of the Charity Organisation Society (nor of the National Council of Civil Liberties - arguably as significant in the practical history of libertarianism as the Liberty and Property Defence League, which is discussed at length). Within the Labour Party there is no discussion of the ideology of "labourism", surely at least as important as more systematic theories of socialism, syndicalism and administrative collectivism. The valid point is made that many of the complaints directed by left-wing libertarians against capitalism should more properly be directed against industrialism in whatever form; but there is no corresponding discussion of that branch of modern libertarianism which finds expression in ecology, conservationism and "small is beautiful".

My most serious doubt about Greenleaf's study arises, however, over his central conception of organizing the study of modern British politics around the antinomies of "collectivism" versus "individualism", and "freedom" versus "state control". The difficulty with using "freedom" as a touchstone of political belief is that no one is against it. With the possible exception of Beatrice Webb, none of the grand interventionists in British public life has ever admitted that his or her ultimate aim was any other than to "set the people free". Intervention has always been pursued in the name of "higher freedom" or "freedom from want" or some other conception of freedom supposedly different from that of one's political opponents. Both legal regulation of trade unions and the legal immunities of trade unions are defended by their supporters in the name of freedom - as are both the maintenance of parental control over the sexual practices of children and the dismantling of that control. So it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there are potentially as many different conceptions

much weight as a bent pin. Similarly, the lines of demarcation which people draw between legitimate and illegitimate interventionism seem in the last resort to be almost totally arbitrary. Virtually none of the libertarians discussed by Greenleaf denied that collective action was desirable at some point - be it defence, law and order, regulation of the currency or prevention of starvation. Such lines of demarcation can only be defended by reference to some other principle - utility, natural law, human rights, etc; the lines in themselves are in no sense self-authenticating or self-explanatory. Moreover, it is striking that many people who have been hotly pro or anti-interventionism in one sphere of activity have frequently taken exactly the opposite view in some other sphere. Many mid-nineteenth-century laissez-faire liberals for example were strongly in favour of state prohibition of alcohol. Edwardian distributists who fostered the "service state" in the form of national insurance and old-age pensions, nevertheless required state action to redistribute land and property. In debates of the present day many who favour state intervention to regulate race relations oppose state intervention to regulate immigration - and vice versa. Many professional groups who support state subventions to the services which employ them (the NHS, universities, etc) nevertheless strongly resist threats of state interference in their codes of professional conduct. In my personal view the state should stop intervening to prevent gardeners from burning their bonfires, and should start intervening to stop farmers from burning the countryside - a distinction which I could support with good reasons, but not with reference to "individualism" versus "collectivism".

All these caveats make me doubtful whether Professor Greenleaf has really got to the nub of the conflict in Britain's ideological heritage. Other more profound and more intangible values than collectivism and libertarianism seem to me to be locked in combat in recent British history. Nevertheless, his approach is a powerful antidote to the Manichean posturings that pass for political thought in party manifestos. *The Ideological Heritage* deserves to be widely dipped into, though it is perhaps unlikely to be widely read.

## Prisoners of Hope

The Silver Age of the Italian Jews 1924-1974

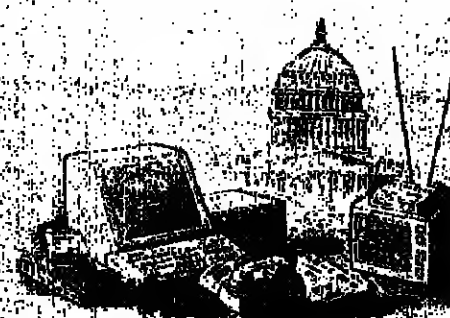
H. STUART HUGHES

What is left of identity when both language and religion are gone? As the most ancient minority of any sort in the Western world, Italy's Jewish community illustrates how a small group of disfigured, highly assimilated men and women can continue to treasure a tradition that is almost invisible to outsiders. H. Stuart Hughes takes as his text the work of six prose writers of Jewish or part-Jewish origin, and shows how they came to an awareness of their special character. The opening date, 1924, marks the earliest great literary success of an Italian Jew. Italo Svevo's *The Confessions of Zeno*, Svevo's attitude toward his origins are echoed in the early fiction of Alberto Moravia; to both the preservation of a Jewish identity seemed a futile enterprise. With the advent of fascism in the 1930s, the writers became more certain of their own Jewishness: common themes of imprisonment and exile haunt the work of Carlo and Primo Levi in *Christ Stopped at Eboli* and *Survival in Auschwitz*. Natalia Ginzburg's *Family Swayings* and Giorgio Bassani's rich oeuvre including *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* depict with sympathy the vicissitudes of Italian Jews in their years of torment. The date 1974 marks the completion of this cycle of writing, the most remarkable outpouring - hence the "Silver Age" - of Italian Jewish creativity since the sixteenth century. Hughes has shown why modern Italian Jews cannot help but be "prisoners of hope": people with an "optimism... born of despair". In their yearning to blend the universal with their own identity. November 1983, £12.75

## Technologies of Freedom

THIEL DE SOLA POOL

Will the current revolution in communications technology - cable, computer, videodisk, satellite - erode our basic rights of free speech? Or could it spearhead a history of the different modes of communication, showing how the traditions of a free press have been defined and strengthened to the US over the past two hundred years. He also shows how technological factors have shaped very different legislative and judicial approaches to the postal service, telegraph, telephone and broadcast media, approaches involving political and economic regulation. Pool argues that technological change need not inevitably result in restrictive government regulations: considering it of overwhelming social importance, he challenges us to seize new opportunities to expand and enrich the traditions of free speech. November 1983, £17.00



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# COMMENTARY

## Eyes on the play

David Nokes

JOHN VANBRUGH  
The Relapse  
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

From the first, Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* was conceived as a star vehicle, though the star was not Colly Cibber, alias Sir Novelty Fashion, alias Lord Foppington, but rather Lord Foppington's periwig. This remarkable creation made its stage debut in Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*, brought on in a special sedan chair by two footmen to ecstatic applause from the audience. Vanbrugh's play, the sequel to Cibber's, reintroduced many of the original characters including Lovelace, Ananda, Sir Novelty (here ennobled to Lord Foppington) and, of course, the periwig. Both Cibber and Vanbrugh successfully identified a shift of mood among their audiences, a new uxorious sobriety which found expression the following year in Collier's *Short View of the Immorality of the Stage*. *Love's Last Shift* and *The Relapse* ushered in the era of so-called sentimental comedy (it should more accurately be entitled sentimental comedy) when Hymen regularly trounced Cupid, connubiality outpaced concupiscence and wigs became more important than wit.

William Gaskill, director of the latest revival of *The Relapse* at the Lyric Hammersmith was brought up in the Royal Court tradition of writers' theatre and consequently has little interest in elaborate stage business or production effects. To be sure, there is a wig in this production which makes its entrance on a modest stage still conspicuous of its meagreness. His fear, he later confides, is that he should cut "so nauseous a figure in the side-box, that the play should be compelled to leave him."

In some ways it is refreshing to see a "Restoration" comedy produced in such an unvarnished, not to say austere manner. The sets are simple, sepia backdrops of London scenes with a bare minimum of props. The characters are dressed in homely fabrics, sober browns and greys, to emphasize Foppington's separateness.

## Homage to an absent diva

Stephen Pickles

La Traviata  
Odeon, Haymarket

Zeffirelli's stage production of *La Traviata* is legendary. Callas sang Violetta, acting the part with all the desperate urgency and intrinsic pathos shown in her own public and private lives. No one must sense her absence in this film more than Zeffirelli. In a letter to her (June 1958) he wrote of a "moral exigency" to have a living and perfect documentation of the spectrum of your possibilities as a great artist, in the years of your splendour as a woman. As if placing her under some personal obligation he confided that the project was a lifetime's ambition. Personally, I believe that for the rest of my days I will reproach myself if we do not succeed in capturing how on three thousand metres of film, your "Traviata" she never agreed.

The justification for filming opera is either to immortalize a great performance, or to create with cinematic resources and skills what cannot be achieved on stage. Opera, however, insists on such heightened reality that location work tends to intrude, speaking prose where there is poetry, photographing landscape instead of painting it. Though in this film we have the easy demonstration of Zeffirelli's cinematic imagination, the worst moments are chocolate-box naturalistic cross-cut to Alfredo's sister, and all soft-focus and Pre-Raphaelite reticence in the country. The happiness of Alfredo and Violetta is

visualized as an expensive advertisement - cutting beautiful garden flowers, boating lazily down a lovely river, tumbling into a babbling brook while attempting to cross a picturesque log-bridge. Things are better indoors. The great set-pieces dazzle with Zeffirelli's customary theatrical flair. Bolshoi dancers help in the ball scene, the extras enjoy themselves with characteristic energy, and when a principal's art or a duet demands their attention, that most difficult of conventions is observed without loss of individuality. This is opera production at its best. The camera is secondary, a tool in the hands of a theatrical master rather than a toy being shown off by a whiz-kid.

But the story concerns more than the gay life. Duina's heroine grasps hopelessly after happiness and is doomed to die of consumption. Character is fate, and the brief moment of natural and consummate passion is merely an exquisite digression for Violetta before death takes her into the pantheon of fictional immortals. There is not much time in Verdi's opera. Music sets the pace for the smallest of remarks as well as for the grandest lyrical appeal. It restricts yet it deepens. We are moved before we can understand the occasion, and our complicated feelings soon reject facile characterization, however beautifully sung. Violetta's aria with rare subtlety in this strains her technique. She manages to interpret as well as sing, and has a fascinating presence which Zeffirelli allows to pervade the opening scene while the prelude plays, as in a dream. Her apartment is being inhabited even as she

visualized as an expensive advertisement - cutting beautiful garden flowers, boating lazily down a lovely river, tumbling into a babbling brook while attempting to cross a picturesque log-bridge. Things are better indoors. The great set-pieces dazzle with Zeffirelli's customary theatrical flair. Bolshoi dancers help in the ball scene, the extras enjoy themselves with characteristic energy, and when a principal's art or a duet demands their attention, that most difficult of conventions is observed without loss of individuality. This is opera production at its best. The camera is secondary, a tool in the hands of a theatrical master rather than a toy being shown off by a whiz-kid.

## A family frivolity

Edward Mendelson

VIRGINIA WOOLF  
Freshwater  
New York University Theatre

The most improbable triumph of the New York theatre season has been the production in French of a play Virginia Woolf wrote in English to amuse Bloomsbury. Many mountains laboured to bring forth this charmingly ridiculous mouse. The cast includes Eugene Ionesco, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Nathalie Sarraute. The local sponsor is the Center for French Civilization and Culture of New York University. Foreign sponsors are the British Council, L'Association Française d'Action Artistique and Le Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication.

*Freshwater* conflates real and imaginary incidents from the lives of Julia Margaret Cameron (Virginia Woolf's great-aunt). George Frederick Watts and Alfred Tennyson. Mrs Cameron and her husband await the arrival of the coffin they insist on taking with them to India. Ellen Terry, tired of posing as Modesty for her husband Watts, runs off to Bloomsbury with a naval officer. Tennyson recites *Maud*, inaccurately. At the end Queen Victoria arrives to confer the OM on Watts and a peerage on Tennyson. Virginia Woolf wrote a long-winded version of the play in 1923, abandoned it in a drawer, and made a sprightlier version for a production at a party given by Vanessa Bell in 1935. The original cast, like the script, was a family affair, starring Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Julian Bell, Duncan Grant, with miscellaneous Stephens. The two versions were first published in 1976, then translated by

the translator makes heavy weather of this. The French version is a more successful one. It is slow-paced - too slow for some of the comedy - and strung along with static. Even when he is shackled with chains (a comic device, Gaskill gives us the play uncut and uncluttered. But the result is a production which

en était encore besoin - une nouvelle affirmation de la bêtise et de la brutalité masculine. The text itself provides a voice for "In supreme subversion, sur notre chignon de bataille intérieure." The New York cast takes it all more lightly. The farce is broad. The music is by Sullivan. Everyone dances. Watts receives, instead of the OM, l'Ordre de la Beauté.

*Freshwater* will be presented by the same cast at Riverside Studios on November 26 and 27.

*Freshwater* proves far more attractive in French than in English. The self-congratulatory iconoclasm of the original, its air of Eminent Victorianism, give way in translation to mood of objectless frivolity. Names like Bloomsbury and Gordon Square shed their earnest status as in-jokes and become equivalents of Chaucer's Cockayne and Cuckoo. Tennyson, Watts and the Camerons are no longer ancestral shades, relentlessly exorcised, but figures of pure nonsense.

In a production like this, acting ability matters less than a transparent eagerness to please. Simone Benmussa's direction offers eagerness all round. Some professional ballast is provided by Florence Delay, the lead in Breton's film *Jeune fille d'Arc*, as Ellen Terry presides in a semi-diplomatic dress. Eugene Ionesco, supposedly Tennyson ("le célèbre symboliste", explains the translator), looks more like Father Christmas in mourning for one of his elves, and presides benevolently. Alain Robbe-Grillet as Charles Hay Cameron mugs and beams with agreeable emphasis; the only line the author's *Projet pour une révolution à New York* seems unable to remember is "De foi, d'espérance et de charité". Two New Yorkers join the company: Tom Bishop as the naval officer brings a touch of American earnestness to the prevailing frolic, while David Nokes convincingly mimics the role of a porpoise.

The casting of Nathalie Sarraute (eighty-three according to francophone references, eighty-one or seventy-eight according to anglophone ones) in the invented part of Julia Butler has a lucky aptness, as the first given to her character from the abandoned 1923 version echo the visionary speeches of Captain Shotover in *Heartbreak House*. Which Virginia Woolf had seen in 1923? *Freshwater* seems something of a burlesque on Shaw's play. Joyce Mansour plays Mrs Cameron in the mood of Hesione Hushby; Florence Delay's Ellen Terry has the hymeneal resolution of Ellie Dunn; the baffled idealism of Maud Dunn reappears in Guy Dumay's George Frederick Watts. And the arrival - loud and astonishing - of Jean-Paul Aron as Queen Victoria, in make-up that could stop a clock, takes the place of the bombs.

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## FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of November 9, 1933, carried the following review of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* by Gertrude Stein:

It is possible that Miss Stein's philosophical training in America contributed to her habit of statement. Among the students of her time William James gave her the highest marks, but it was because she wrote in her examination, "Dear Professor James, I am sorry but really I do not feel a bit like an examination paper in philosophy to-day," and then left. She also studied psychology and published papers on the subject; but her work on automatic writing, as she herself tells us, led to her individual mode of composition for which she is chiefly known. Here she does not write in this manner, but instead cultivates an extreme flatness and simplicity of statement, a naivety which is sometimes carried to the point of indifference to grammar, and yet with an undercurrent of alypsia. It is a style calculated to baffle the inquirer. Her wit is so remote from cleverness that it is sometimes impossible to see whether it is intended, and her serious remarks are often so odd that it is doubtful whether they are not ironic. Miss Stein describes how she succeeded in "fixing" a philosopher by arguing that the English needed to learn Greek because Greek was the only language in which the argument was not intended or merely meant to provoke. And she seems equally sure whenever anything appears in an intellectual idea or generalization turns up in her book will surely find the reader and for all one can tell may be meant to

## The machinery of delight

Martin Kemp

Drawings by Raphael  
British Museum, until January 15

Is it possible to write about Raphael without involving the near-obligatory comparisons with Leonardo and Michelangelo? And is it possible to avoid the implicitly or explicitly defensive tone which such comparisons have evoked in the modern literature on Raphael? In this review I should like to answer emphatically yes to both questions, though the fact that I have felt obliged to raise them at the outset is an acknowledgment that they cannot be altogether dismissed.

Can the great preponderance of so many different artists and critics during the three centuries after the artist's death really have been wrong when they took Raphael as their supreme exemplar of artistic excellence? It is easy to imagine the brilliant drawings in this exhibition meeting with the approval of a Watteau no less than a David. Raphael's graphic range extends from a delicate romantic sensibility of a deeply human kind to an unyielding rigour of intellectual control which would satisfy even the most dogmatic Poussinist. Perhaps it is the very fluidity of his unrivalled responsiveness to different artistic demands which arouses our modern suspicions. Somehow every varied solution exudes an air of rightness which is (or should be if we were properly attuned) both surprising and inevitable. This inevitable rightness, this apparent state of perfect intellectual and aesthetic poise, has become so familiar as to lose something of its original sense of excitement. Perhaps Ingres was right to identify Raphael with Mozart; the

reviewed here.

The exhibition as a whole is limited to works from English collections, if limited in the right word. The astonishing richness of the Raphael holdings in England; the background to which is nicely explained by John Gere and Nicholas Turner in their catalogue introduction, means that every major aspect, chronological and functional, is represented.

Anyone familiar with the British Museum Prints and Drawings Gallery will know exactly what to expect - careful scholarship and balanced connoisseurship, sometimes verging on over-caution, and an unostentatious presentation which makes little or no concession to modern fashions. *Afficionados* of the print room shows will also be familiar with the problem: the muddling sequence of wall-mounted and free-standing cases, which makes for less than smooth progression along the planned route; the oblique top-lighting which makes the less well-preserved drawings (of which a worrying number come from Chatsworth) look like relief maps of irregular terrain; and the somewhat unvaried quality which comes from too many exhibits (202) of an essentially similar nature.

The catalogue (256pp, with 202 black-and-

white illustrations. £8.95, 0 7141 0794 8) is also as expected - addressing itself at a high level to actual and aspiring connoisseurs. Technical questions are not consistently explained. For instance, there is an account of "auxiliary cartoons" but no clear exposition of the troublesome question of the "offsets" made from chalk drawings. The convoluted discussions of the history of related paintings in some of the entries (eg nos 63 and 113) really require the assistance of reference works. The sooty photographs of completed paintings in the exhibition help less than they should. The less wary visitor should also be warned that the recent tide of inclusivist attributions in Raphael scholarship, for all its welcome open-mindedness, has washed some distinctly odorous fish on to the shore of Raphael's oeuvre. The organizers' understandable reluctance to commit themselves, particularly in the individual labels, will leave many visitors in a state of doubt.

The ultimate aims behind this exhibition and its catalogue are not significantly different from those laid down by Sir Charles Robinson in his 1879 catalogue of the Ashmolean drawings: "it was essential to arrive at definite conclusions as to the authenticity of the several specimens; to determine, if possible, the intention and ultimate destination of each drawing; and also, in the case of preparatory studies for known works, to give some account of the finished productions".

These are laudable and indeed essential ambitions, but there does now seem to me to be a need for different ways of approaching an artist's preparatory drawings. The almost exclusive attention to a ladder of chronological

tions which other juxtapositions might suggest. Why did Raphael pick up a pen one moment and a piece of red chalk another? Did a certain kind of subject elicit a specific kind of creative process? How did the scale of the project affect his design procedure? Is there any real consistency in his methods across his career or even within the same period? There are many such possible lines of enquiry.

I believe there is considerable scope for new kinds of appreciation of Raphael's machinery of invention, allying minute focus on the "archaeology" of each drawing with broad questions of both his and Renaissance habits of mind. I am convinced his drawings still have a great deal to tell us, but only if we shift our expectations of what is the proper, authorized way of approaching them. Spectators might make their own contributions by departing from the tyranny of the chronological progression from 1 to 202. Try selecting all the studies of male heads - or all red chalk drawings - or preliminary sketches - or whatever category you wish. You may get some odd looks as you dart here and there, against the tide, but you will have the pleasure of making your own discoveries, which will take you beyond the standard, conditioned response.

Also illustrate the divergence of opinions and attitudes of these vital years. Lindsay Anderson's new production, while claiming to be a "play for today", shows great respect for specificities of time and place.

Although Kenneth Mollor's sets are suitably

working parts of the machine as a whole. Yet equally it is difficult not to feel that drawing was an exercise of delight in its own right. For example, the so-called "auxiliary cartoons" - full-scale studies of details, mainly heads, made from the first a special value as exemplary drawings beyond their ostensible function as cribs for the final painting. Many of the works in this exhibition breathe an unabashed sense of joy in the act of drawing.

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# COMMENTARY

## Seclusion

Peter Kemp

Frank Delaney and Arena  
BBC2

Given Borges's taste for doubling, it seemed highly appropriate that he should appear twice on television in one week. Interviewed on the *Frank Delaney* programme, he was also the subject of an *Arena* profile. What emerged most notably on both occasions was a humane modesty. Though the Delaney programme worked itself up, as usual, into a lather of hyperbole, Borges would have none of it.

"I know my limits", he also emphasized on *Arena*. Down to earth about his recondite ploys, he claimed that his is "quite a small bag of tricks". What goes into it, he pointed out too, has often been drawn from other authors - particularly English and American writers of the later nineteenth century. In life and work, both programmes suggested, Borges resembles a survivor from that period. Cerebrally gothic, toying with the esoteric, fascinated by the *doppelgänger*, labyrinths and paradox, his mind weirdly flickers with chameleon resemblances to Stevenson, Chesterton, Poe.

It's hard to think of a more literary litterateur - as *Arena*'s résumé of his life brought out. For Borges, living and libraries seem to have been virtually synonymous. Given the run of the family bookshelves as a boy, he was urged by his father, "Read what you enjoy" - an injunction he appears to have spent the rest of his life omnivorously obeying. When he eventually took a job, it was in a library - where he preferred the catalogues to his col-

Library: though, by then, as he noted with placid irony - "care of this city of books is handed over to sightless eyes" - he had become blind.

Borges's blindness, *Arena* made clear, was a fate he'd long been stoically awaiting: his father, grandfather and grandmother had succumbed to it before him. (It served to complete a process of seclusion begun as early as his boyhood. Though resident in a "suburb of dangerous streets and showy sunsets", he re-called, he "grew up in a garden behind a fence of iron palings" and a "library of endless English books".) Rigorously penned in, cultivated, artificial, that garden foreshadowed his stories, just as the library was to prove their matrix. Borges's work, as he kept underlining, is intensely self-contained. The only characters to interest him are written ones: he has "not created a single character so far as I'm concerned".

Accordingly, *Arena*'s attempts to dramatize some Borges stories seemed misguided. The figures in them - ciphers moved through elegant algebraic permutations - flatly refused to come to life. Only one work, "The Meeting", transferred effectively to the screen. A creepy narrative about the knives of two dead rivals taking on a murderous life of their own; and impelling two men into a fatal skirmish, it adroitly draws on Borges's interest in both *fin de siècle* eeriness and the world of the gauchito. Here its ritualistic choreography was powerfully fleshed out - especially in the final scene where the fighters lunged and parried on a darkened lawn while the cicadas shrilled like taut nerves.

Physical toughness recurrently receives attention in Borges's stories. In life, he displays a different kind of fortitude - apparent in his affecting candour about the way his blindness has impeded his access to facts as well as fiction. Speaking of his former abatement from criticism of the Argentine military junta, he explained "Baling blind, not reading the newspapers, I'm very ignorant": friends had thought it best to keep him in the dark about "all that misery; all those crimes", of whose existence he's become belatedly aware. "That's the reason I was silent before", he stated with dignified matter-of-factness, adding, with a characteristic turning to English literature for backing, "Ignorance, dear Madam, sheer ignorance", as Dr Johnson said."



# Composer to the nation

Alan Walker

DEZSŐ LEGÁNY  
Ferenc Liszt and His Country 1869-1873  
325pp. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó.  
963 13 1541 X

Given the mass of evidence about Liszt's family origins, it is astonishing that so seemingly simple a matter as his national identity was ever disputed by the scholars. Emilie Haraszti claimed that Liszt was French in outlook and feeling, and that the Gallic temperament acquired in his youth, in Paris, remained with him for life. James Honeker asserted that Liszt was German, at any rate in the second half of his life. Norbert Dunkel said that Liszt was ashamed of his origins and never spoke of them. As if to complete this round of logical alternatives, Peter Raabe insisted that Liszt was cosmopolitan. "Liszt," he declared, "belonged to the whole world."

There was always a need for a definitive book about Liszt's Hungarian connections. Until it appeared it was difficult to deal with Haraszti and Raabe objectively. Now, thanks to the tireless efforts of Dezső Legány, we have a book which is worthy of its subject, and which is bound to take its place in the permanent Liszt literature. *Ferenc Liszt and His Country, 1869-1873* is a masterpiece of musicalological research. It was first published more than ten years ago, in Hungary, under the title *Liszt Ferenc Magyarországon, 1869-1873*. For this long-awaited English edition Dr Legány has enlarged and improved the text. The wait has been well worthwhile. Exhaustive, meticulous, objective, this book is unlikely ever to be superseded. For years Legány toiled in the archives in search of earlier scholars, and this has enabled him to reconstruct Liszt's itinerary in Budapest in remarkable detail, and often on a daily basis. Liszt was born in 1811, in Raiding, a small

town in the Esterházy sheepfolds who sacrificed everything for his prodigy son, and eventually removed him to Vienna for piano lessons with Carl Czerny. "It was as if Nature herself had formed a pianist," Czerny observed, "after hearing the nine-year-old Wunderkind play. He undertook to instruct the boy free of charge, an arrangement that lasted for fourteen months. Liszt then settled in Paris, the centre of the pianistic world. It is a three-fold tale how he carved out for himself one of the most spectacular careers in the history of performance. For fifteen years Liszt basked in fame and glory and he appears to have forgotten Hungary. Then, in the spring of 1838, a catastrophe occurred which shook him to his psychological foundations. After an unusually severe winter the frozen Danube melted and overflowed its banks. A tidal wave rolled across Hungary which was unstoppable. Entire villages were swept away, crops were ruined and families stalked the land. Pest, the low-lying city of the Magyars, stood in the path of the oncoming waters, and was inundated. Nearly 9,000 houses collapsed in the water; many people were drowned. It was the greatest natural disaster to strike Hungary in modern times. Liszt has told us how deeply the disaster affected him, and relayed in him the memories of his childhood. "O my wild and distant country," he wrote, "my unknown friends, my great family! Your painful cry calls me back to you, and deeply moved I bow my head, ashamed that I could forget you for such a long time." This does not sound like a man without a homeland. Least of all does it sound like a man who wished to hide his background. Liszt's response to the international appeal launched by the Hungarian government was to give a series of piano recitals in Vienna for the victims of the flood, which raised the colossal sum of 24,000 guilden, the largest single donation from a private source. When he finally returned to Hungary the following year, Liszt was received as a national hero. Although he was only twenty-eight years old, he was already the best-known living Hungarian.

Thereafter, Liszt visited Hungary with fre-

quency, even during his years of residence in Weimar (1848-61). He constantly declared himself for Hungarian causes, and he composed much music with Hungarian connotations - *Funérailles, Hungaria*, the *St Elisabeth* oratorio, the Hungarian Coronation Mass, the *Hungarian Historical Portraits*, for example. Following his forced resignation from Weimar, Liszt spent much time in Italy. When in 1865, he was inducted into the lower orders of the priesthood, he became heavily involved in the reform of church music. It was only in 1869 (the point at which this book begins) that Abbé Liszt, as he was now known, started to divide his time equally between Weimar, Rome and Budapest in an endless circle of travel.

Liszt's annual sojourns in Budapest usually lasted for three or four months, and he soon became integrated into the musical life of the nation. At first he was terrified of being drawn back into the career of an active performer. He wanted nothing more from his old age than time to compose. "My whole career lies in my hand and the tip of my pen," he wrote in October 1870. "If I succeed in writing a few good pages of music, then I do not ask for more."



Two studies by Edgar Degas on show at the David Carritt Gallery, 15 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1. Inscribed "lueurs et reflets sur le dessous du violon".

Alas, he was not to be left in peace. The Hungarians rightly insisted on bringing their most famous musician into the national forum. On June 13, 1871, Liszt was appointed to the rank of Royal Hungarian Counsellor, a sure indication of the enormous prestige in which he was held in his home. This entitled him to sit in the Hungarian legislature, although there is no evidence that he ever did so.

The year 1873 marked the fiftieth anniversary of Liszt's public career, and there was an outpouring of national sentiment. A "Liszt Jubilee Committee" was formed which included such luminaries as Cardinal Haynald, Count Széchenyi and Apponyi, Baron Augusz, and Reményi, and a round of concerts, benedictions and speeches was mounted to celebrate the event. Delegations arrived from Weimar, Warsaw, Vienna and Sopron bearing laurel wreaths and scrolls of honour. The climax came with a performance of Liszt's oratorio *Christus*, conducted by Hans Richter, and attended by a galaxy of international celebrities.

Hungary still lacked a national school of music. The country's brightest talents were obliged to go abroad (like Liszt himself) for higher instruction. Liszt's presence in Budapest acted as a catalyst, and on November 25, 1875, the Liszt Academy of Music opened its doors with Liszt himself as its first President. The original building was located on Fish Square (near the Pest side of the Elisabeth Bridge), and Liszt was given rent-free accommodation there - the only "free" he ever received for his services. In 1879-80 the Academy moved to larger quarters at 67 Sugar Street, where Liszt was also given an apartment. Liszt's last years in Budapest were spent in his studies in his building. Only in 1907 did the Liszt Academy move into its present building, which has become one of the musical landmarks of Europe. The fact that Liszt was the

President gave him the chance to appoint faculty and to draw up the curriculum. He insisted that all piano students study composition, that all composition students study the piano. The injunction seems harsh. What conservatory today would tolerate it? Liszt, however, thought that music was indivisible, that the separation of performance from composition was detrimental to both. Until his death in 1886, all his students at the Academy had to graduate in improvisation.

When he was in his early sixties Liszt began the study of the Hungarian language. His teacher was a Budapest monk named Zsigmond Vadasz. According to Legány, Liszt's studies with Vadasz were more advanced than is generally supposed. It need not surprise us that Liszt could not speak his native language. Thousands of Hungarians born in western Hungary were brought up with German as their mother tongue; and in Liszt's native village Magyar was simply not spoken. Even István Széchenyi, Hungary's greatest national leader, only learned Hungarian in later life. When the first Magyar words were uttered in the Hungarian legislature, in 1847, Széchenyi was obliged



to record the fact in his diary in German: "Alles war ergriffen, viele weinten." ("Everyone was deeply moved, many were weeping").

This book contains a brilliant exposé of Olga Janina, the so-called "Cossack Countess", one of the most dubious characters in the Liszt literature, and one who caused him much pain and embarrassment in his old age. Her real name was Olga Zielska, and she was neither a Cossack nor a countess. Whatever pretensions she had to a moneyed background came from her father Ludwik Zielski, who manufactured boot polish in Lemberg. Olga changed her name to Janina because she thought that it would have a better ring to it in the aristocratic circles of Europe in which she wanted to mix. Not without talent as a pianist, Olga became Liszt's pupil in 1870, and soon became enamoured of him. She followed him to Budapest and prowled outside his apartment for nights on end. Liszt rejected her advances and was a witness to her attempted suicide. Compelled to leave Hungary, Olga removed herself to Paris where she exacted a suitable revenge for her humiliation by publishing her "memoirs" - a sequence of highly coloured novels, the first of which was called *Souvenirs d'une comtesse* and was published under the pseudonym "Robert Franz". Everything that Olga tells us in these books is fiction, meant to obscure her mundane origins. We owe a debt of gratitude to Dezső Legány for clearing away the fog of confusion which has for so long surrounded this troublesome parasite.

Well documented, thoroughly researched and attractively written, Legány's book may be confidently recommended to all serious Liszt researchers. It is good news that this intrepid scholar is already at work on a successor volume which will carry the story of Liszt's Hungarian connections down to the last year of his life.

## Early notes

E. K. Borthwick

THOMAS J. MATHIESEN (Editor)  
Aristides Quintillanus On Music: In Three Books  
217pp. Yale University Press. £24.50,  
\$30.00 (hbk). 0301020938

The contribution of the ancient Greeks to the development of music is given less prominence in musical histories nowadays than was the case fifty or so years ago, when "the music of the ancients" provided a suitable introductory chapter. Contrast, for example, the comparatively sceptical observations of Isobel Henderson in the *New Oxford History* with the paeany of what we owe to Greece by Kathleen Schlesinger in the volume of the older series which it replaced. The developing enthusiasm for "ethnomusicology" has resulted in much research into interesting ways in which primitive peoples slap their thighs, or blow flutes with their noses, as into Pythagoras' ratios or Aristoxenian scales. Aristides Quintilianus, one of the three most important extant Greek musical writers, would doubtless have deplored such *ophiologia* (Indifference to the Muses), as he calls it, with reference to his own times.

But, granted the degree of interest in Aristides among specialists who have grappled with the *arcana* of ancient music, it is curious that until now no English translation of the complete three books of his *de musica* has been published. For long enough, even the Greek text was difficult to consult, the editions of Meibom (1652) and Jahn (1882), like the German translation of Schäfer (1937), being quite scarce books. The gap was filled by R. B. Winington- Ingram's 1963 Teubner, which has been used, with minor modifications, by Thomas J. Mathiesen in this translation for the Yale University Press.

able bibliography in this field, and in his introduction is both learned and discerning in the assessment of work done on the author. Aristides is an enigmatic personality, whose date and milieu are disputable. His Greek-Roman music, and the fact that he occasionally alludes to things Roman (including lost parts of Cicero), have led some scholars to associate him in some way with the famous Quintilian. Mathiesen is rightly non-committal on this, and tends to favour a late third or even fourth-century date for him. This would place him after Ptolemy, whom he does not mention, but

Mathiesen sees traces of knowledge of his theory, and also of Porphyry's and Plotinus' Aristides is in fact eclectic in his sources, through Platonic, Peripatetic and neo-Pythagorean influences are ubiquitous, and his handling of Damon, Socrates' musical guru, and the notorious ancient scales which he repeats, have aroused hopes that some of his useful may be valuable evidence for fifth-century musical practice.

To understand, and put into readable English, this learned and difficult writer is a formidable undertaking. The first book covers conventional ground of the musical theories about notes, scales, ratios and the like, with an unusually extensive section on metre and rhythm, and the second deals with philosophical views of music and the soul, musical education, striking observations on the aesthetic and therapeutic value of music, on euphony, and some literary criticism, especially Homer. But the third book drifts into a rapid atmosphere of numerology, cosmology, astrology and mysticism, and one wishes that somewhere Aristides had instead recorded the practical matters that tantalize us, such as the strutting and ad playing of the lyre, or the blowing of the *aulos*. He is a pedantic writer, now and then, now verbose, in exposition, and with little charm, apart from occasional lyrical flights in poems and perorations, which Mathiesen describes as having "special power and beauty". Mathiesen has deliberately not gone out of his way to "make the work seem more accessible and modern", and the Greekless reader must be prepared to engage in much that is both mind- and eye-boggling. The translation, however, is accompanied by useful annotations, and researchers in this field will be grateful for any help provided in understanding an important, and neglected, author.

## A diffident custodian

Donald Fanger

MAX HAYWARD  
Writers in Russia: 1917-1978  
Edited with an Introduction by Patricia Blake  
340pp. Harvill. Paperback, £7.95,  
\$20.25 (hbk). 000722927X

Max Hayward never wrote a book in his cruelly abbreviated lifetime (1924-1979). None the less, his authority in the field of Russian and Soviet studies was enormous. So, too, were his gifts, and there were undoubtedly many who deplored his failure to complement the invaluable translations and commentaries he produced with a book of his own.

In one sense, this is the book he refused to write - prefaced by the personal story he took pains to withhold from his friends and associates. Inevitably, by the very admission it elicits, it renews one's sense of what he might have done, what he might have gone on to do. Nineteen years ago he wrote that "because the Soviet regime has abused and distorted the relations between politics and literature, it would be unwise for us to react by divorcing the two completely"; the reason, as he notes of post-Stalin literature in one of the essays reprinted here, is that without an awareness "that it is written in defiance of certain previously imposed standards, and that a challenge to them still involves difficulties or hazards to the author, one would lose the odd sense of tension which Soviet literature derives from its political context", the difference being that "between watching a man walk on a tightrope and watching a man walking on the ground". This awareness led him consistently to seek - quite scarce books. The gap was filled by R. B. Winington- Ingram's 1963 Teubner, which has been used, with minor modifications, by Thomas J. Mathiesen in this translation for the Yale University Press.

able bibliography in this field, and in his introduction is both learned and discerning in the assessment of work done on the author. Aristides is an enigmatic personality, whose date and milieu are disputable. His Greek-Roman music, and the fact that he occasionally alludes to things Roman (including lost parts of Cicero), have led some scholars to associate him in some way with the famous Quintilian. Mathiesen is rightly non-committal on this, and tends to favour a late third or even fourth-century date for him. This would place him after Ptolemy, whom he does not mention, but

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Of again, on the characteristic maximalism of Russian intellectuals: "With the ruthless candor typical of it, [Russian nineteenth-century] literature . . . shows how easily undirected concern for the fate of Russia - and then, since there was nothing to be done about it, for the whole of mankind - could spend itself in fatuous talk, heroic posturing, or sheer hubbub. An inevitable result was that the intelligentsia engaged in a constant search for all-embracing formulas or systems of ideas which might seem to provide not only a complete view of the world but also a total solution to all its problems."

Writing of the enthusiasm with which the poets Blok, Bely and Esenin greeted the October Revolution: "By a strange irony, therefore, Soviet literature had its beginnings in the religious ecstasy of a small group of poets who were the very antithesis of the cold-blooded engineers of October", and of the climate of that literature a decade later: "Almost all the leading novelists of the time shared a feeling that they were witnesses of a process beyond good and evil - a contest between implacable historical forces which individual human beings could scarcely influence. Society was seen as an arena for the interplay of impersonal forces against whose background individual self-assertion was a futile gesture. The fellow travellers thus helped to create a public mood in which dissent, even the clinging to one's personal idiosyncrasies, was at the best quixotic and comic, and at the worst the reprehensible posturing of doomed solipsists. The puny eccentrics who resisted were bound, in the phrase of the time, to be thrown onto 'the rubbish heap of history.'" (The achievement of the socialist realism that followed, he observes shrewdly, lay "not in creating positive heroes to serve as inspiring models to the reader [they were far too wooden and contrived], but in

playing on a natural feeling of guilt, particularly among intellectuals, and making it appear that there was something shameful about having a mind of one's own."

The second part of the book, by contrast, consists of studies of particular authors - Pasternak, Akhmatova, Sinyavsky, and Solzhenitsyn. Originally written as introductions (with the exception of the TLS review of 1976), these are exemplary in several senses. Thus "Meetings with Pasternak" not only tells the extraordinary story of the poet's charmed life and tragic-heroic career as a Soviet subject; it also includes some of the best pages ever written on the nature and meaning of *Doctor Zhivago*. Similarly, in his review of Sinyavsky's books on Pushkin and Gogol, Hayward manages not merely to characterize the achievement of all three writers succinctly and memorably; he provides at the same time critical insights of great penetration - despite the fact that these were never a goal for him in their own right. His major concern, in virtually everything he wrote, was to establish frameworks

## Leonard Schapiro

DINA KAMINSKAYA  
Final Judgment: My Life as a Soviet Defence Lawyer  
Translated by Michael Glenny  
364pp. Harvill Press. £12.95,  
\$30.00 (hbk). 000722927X

Dina Kaminskaya practised as an advocate in the Soviet Union from her graduation, during the war, until her expulsion from the country, together with her husband, in 1977. She now lives in the United States. Although her main claim to fame is as a defender of dissidents, she did not in fact become involved with political cases until 1967 when she acted for Vladimir Bukovsky. Although *Final Judgment* adds to our knowledge of some well-known trials of dissidents, its main interest lies in the light it throws upon the difficulties which an advocate faces in the Soviet Union. Little, in fact, is known about the profession of advocate in that country - it has only very recently been made the subject of a doctoral dissertation to the University of London, and has hardly been treated in Western literature on Soviet law.

The Soviet legal profession is divided into two very unequal halves: the respected prosecutors who are state employees, part of the "establishment", and nearly always party members; and defence advocates, who are semi-private, though of course rigorously controlled, despised and insulted in the eyes of the authorities to win recognition in the eyes of the public by subject to cynicism and by putting the interests of the state above those of their clients. Those, like Kaminskaya, who choose not to do this, come to a bad end. Readers of the *Kafka's Trial* will find familiar echoes: the offices to the courts, the fact that acquittals are unknown and the like - all the more remarkable in that Kafka wrote before the era of totalitarianism.

Acquittals are certainly rare in Soviet criminal trials, though this is probably due as much to the inquisitorial system of trial and the method of preliminary investigation inherited from the pre-revolutionary régime. But the from the pre-revolutionary régime were illegals in Soviet Russia, once an indictment

has been drawn up, the prestige, if not the career, of the investigating official is committed to a conviction, and the judges are likewise biased in favour of upholding the authority of the state against a private individual. The contempt directed against the advocate is partly explained by that bias, but it is also a relic of the hatred of the bar (shared by Lenin) manifested in the early years of the Revolution when the whole profession was regarded as hostile to the new régime - which, in view of its high-minded liberal traditions and faced with the blatant disregard for elementary legality characteristic of Bolshevism from the first, it probably was.

Still, occasionally there are acquittals. Nearly a hundred pages of this book are taken up with a detailed account of the trial of two schoolboys charged with raping a girl, who had subsequently died. The evidence against the boys was, to say the least, flimsy. An old woman, who, it later appeared, was nearly stone deaf, claimed to have heard their voices importing a girl - a long way off rape, even if true. The circumstantial evidence (lack of mud on their clothes, the medical data and the like) was all in their favour. But they had confessed. The evidence which later emerged strongly suggested that they had each been separately persuaded to confess by hardened criminals placed in the cells in which they were imprisoned, who harangued them about the advantages they would reap if they pleaded the advantages by admitting guilt. The examining authorities' career would have benefited from his indictment being upheld. The local communist party was also anxious for a conviction, and invoked the interest of the Central Committee. The trial judge's lack of impartiality, her behaviour towards Kaminskaya and the witnesses for the defence, and her admission of evidence and so forth, were contemptible. Nevertheless, the irrepressible Kaminskaya fought every inch of the way, secured a retrial on appeal, and eventually an acquittal. The whole process took about two-and-a-half years, most of which the two boys spent in prison. The incident provides a salutary warning against the prevalent illusion to the West that non-political trials in the Soviet Union are all right, and that it is only those of dissidents which are biased.

Advocacy in the defence of dissidents is in a class by itself. Too much zeal on the part of an advocate means that he (or she) will lose the right to act in such cases - "access", as it is called - if nothing worse. (At least one advocate was disbarred as a result of his defence in a political trial.) But in Soviet practice two of the most obvious lines of defence are precluded, end the attempt to pursue them is fraught with grave risk for the advocate. Broadly speaking, dissidents are tried under one of two articles of the Criminal Code: Article 170, which deals with slander of the Soviet system; and Article 190, which covers various forms of violation of public order. The two obvious defences are strictly prohibited in the practice of the Soviet court: in the case of Article 170 that the alleged slander was in fact true - since obviously, even in Soviet law, a statement of the truth cannot amount to slander; and in the case of Article 190, that the accused was exercising a legitimate constitutional right, such as free speech. Even if the defendants are not precluded from taking the Soviet constitution into account, its wording is carefully selected to limit the right of free speech, which is only granted in order to "strengthen the socialist system" or words to that effect, in the 1936 and 1977 versions. A phrase of this kind is obviously open to the widest interpretation by officials who are completely immune from judicial review. Kaminskaya believes that in spite of these limitations an honest advocate can serve truth by drawing attention, within the limits of the possible, to the disregard of the law practised by the courts.

A great merit of this fascinating book (which reads very well in Michael Glenny's translation) is its fairness. Dina Kaminskaya is throughout at pains to give credit to those who, in the difficult conditions of Soviet life, try to behave with decency. She is unstinting in her praise of the judge who conducted the retrial of the two schoolboys, and is careful to record acts of generosity, kindness and honesty.

for understanding, and in this he was masterly. The textual exploration of what lay within those contexts attracted him less: his essays leave no doubt that his mastery extended to minute particulars, but these tend to appear in his writing only as vivid illustrations rather than as objects of curiosity in their own right.

The diffidence, mentioned by Leonard Schapiro in his preface, which kept Hayward from "bestriding the stage on his own", led him into willing and frequent collaboration with other gifted people; it also involved an acceptance of a kind of built-in obsolescence, as others extended the points that he was often the first to make by investigating problems which he chose only to indicate in passing. The surprise is not that *Writers in Russia* should show occasional signs of such disting, but that the essays it contains should retain such a large share of their force and value years and sometimes decades after their first appearance.

Max Hayward's unique contribution to his times can be inferred from his publications, but only partially; ultimately, it lay in the role he played as (to use Patricia Blake's phrase) "custodian of Russian literature until such time as it could be restored to its people". A full account of that role would go far towards explaining the magnitude of the loss his death represents. The editor's long introduction provides such an explanation, but in terms that emphasize rather the man and his gifts. The portrait offered here is a personal one - some will think excessively so - but it presents in fascinating detail a Max of whom most of his friends and admirers could know only particular aspects. Re-creating the life and re-establishing the presence of a remarkable individual, it makes of this book a double, and doubly valuable, memorial.

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We regret to record the death on November 2 of Leonard Schapiro. This review is the last of his valued contributions to the TLS in the field of Soviet and Russian history and politics. Writing of his *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (TLS, May 13, 1955), our reviewer described him as "a natural writer with a disciplined gift for saying exactly what he means in prose of considerable distinction".

Dina Kaminskaya



# Disunited powers

Michael Jones

C. A. J. ARMSTRONG  
England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century  
431pp. Hambledon Press, 35 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1 7AX. £24.  
0907628133

Two of the most ambitious schemes to redraw the political map of Western Europe in the later Middle Ages were the Lancastrian attempt at a systematic conquest of France, which created the short-lived dual monarchy, and the revival of the concept of a Middle Kingdom by the Valois dukes of Burgundy. In the first case the failure of Henry VI and his ministers, despite considerable and often ill-appreciated efforts, to hold on to what Henry V had won, ultimately led to that disenchantment with the Lancastrian regime which turned to despair and the violent quarrels that resulted in the Wars of the Roses. In the second case, for a longer period it did seem that the Valois dukes would be able to create some kind of unity out of the complex of miscellaneous princely and urban territories which ran from the North Sea to the Alps, on the frontier between France and the Empire, and were broadly delimited by the course of the Rhine. But here too, the experiment was wrecked by overweening ambition and a disastrous foreign policy. Nemesis came dramatically in Charles the Bold's three successive defeats at the hands of the Swiss and their allies in 1476-7. For most of his career, C. A. J. Armstrong has been concerned with various aspects of these two historic failures, or rather, as he chooses to view matters, by the history of

the three most closely interrelated powers in fifteenth-century Europe, England, France and Burgundy.

Now that Richard Vaughan has written the standard lives of the four Valois dukes (one of the more remarkable feats in recent medieval scholarship), and that there is an important group of English historians of late medieval France, not to mention the vast retinue who work on England, it may seem strange to recall that when Mr Armstrong began as a young Oxford don in the 1930s the fifteenth century was distinctly unfashionable. In England, as Armstrong has himself written elsewhere, a re-evaluation of the period has occurred since those days which "owes more to the teaching, lecturing and writing of the late K. B. McFarlane than to any other individual". But concern for Continental history during the later Middle Ages was almost non-existent among Englishmen; as that Armstrong's decision to study Burgundy was a brave one. For many years, almost single-handed, he worked extensively in the many rich archives scattered across Europe in which the sources for the duchy's history were to be found. His courage was spectacularly and early rewarded by the discovery at Lille of an account of Richard III's usurpation in 1483 by the Italian Dominic Mancini, hitherto unknown to English historians (and characteristically announced by a letter to *The Times*, another sign of a different age). Ever since then Armstrong has continued to bring new records to light, to signal the existence of little-known manuscripts, even in some of the greatest and best-catalogued libraries, and to astonish by his detailed knowledge of published materials. One of the major benefits of this volume is thus to make more readily available a rich bibliographical source

in its own right, the distillation of a lifetime's discriminating scholarship. It also enables us to pay tribute to a man who through his teaching and supervision, in addition to his writing, has done much to reawaken interest in what had become a badly neglected field.

England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century brings together all Armstrong's publications on this theme with the exception of a notable contribution to the *New Cambridge Modern History*, Volume One (1957) on "The Burgundian Netherlands, 1477-1521". The Burgundian Netherlands, 1477-1521, is a wide-ranging synthesis on "The Golden Age of Burgundy" in *The Courts of Europe, 1400-1800* (1977); the omission of a full bibliography of Armstrong's work is an unfortunate oversight in the present volume. Although there is always the danger that such a collection will disappoint, rereading even the oldest articles here is a rewarding experience. There are indeed some which are now standard reading, like the minute investigation of "Politics and the Battle of St Albans", which is, Mancini apart, Armstrong's most important contribution to fifteenth-century English history. But his concerns have seldom been exclusively political, and an ability to spot interesting angles of approach or new fields for investigation have been a marked feature of his work, for instance, two articles published in 1948 on the inauguration ceremonies of the Yorkist

king and the distribution of news at the time of the Wars of the Roses. The gem of this collection, "The Piety of Cécily, duchess of York: a study in late medieval culture", will delight those who have not discovered *For Pity's Bells* (ed Douglas Woodruff, 1942). For it provides by its careful and sympathetic investigation of Cécily's household routine and reading one of the best brief corrective views derived too exclusively from Hüttenlocher's masterpiece, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, on a society out of harmony "In ossified majesty alternating with melancholy resignation between the feverish enjoyment of an over-worked world and the lurid and terrifying contemplation of the next".

Of the fifteen pieces here, perhaps only the one on Faversham abbey, which is off the main theme, did not warrant republication. For the rest, it is impossible even briefly to summarise the wealth of their content – the longest, over 100 pages, is a detailed scrutiny of the monarchical policies of the Valois dukes; while discussion of the Burgundian dukes and their nobility, and of the languages used in the Burgundian administration, repay close attention – so that they all contribute, some significantly, to a view of the fifteenth century which will only develop from a long and close knowledge of the sources, commendable independent mind and fine judgment.

## Medici management

Peter Partner

J. N. STEPHENS  
The Fall of the Florentine Republic 1512-1530  
265pp. Oxford University Press. £19.50.  
019 8225997

In 1512 and the eve of the acceptance of princely Medici rule in 1532 is a good one, and J. N. Stephens' analysis of Florentine politics in this period, subjected finally to Medici control? His business is therefore with who governed, how they were chosen, and why they were accepted by the political class. The approach, by no means a bad one, derives from Nicolai Rubinstein and his classical study of fifteenth-century Florentine government under the Medici. *The Fall of the Florentine Republic* is published in the same series in paperback. But it lacks not only the open access to the experience, but his breadth, clarity and balance. Stephens devotes too much space to an uncertainly handled narrative of events, and too much, also, to a running commentary on them linked with the works of Florentine political writers of the time. The alleged justification is that these writers were in some sense preparing opinion for the later Medici predicament, but the case is not argued convincingly enough to demonstrate this.

The most valuable parts of the book are the description of the constitutional changes made in the years following the return of the Medici to Florence in 1512, and the details of the financial help given by Florence in the 1520s to the Papacy. The latter section offers the most important researches of Marion Bullard, and shows how the papal Medici exploited their native connections. But why, especially when he concedes that "Florentine history is family history", has Stephens decided to treat the composition of the Florentine factions as irrelevant to his subject? If Medici agents, like the Duke of Newcastle, drew up long lists of reliable and less reliable supporters, why are the contents of the lists neglected? Stephens emphasises the importance of the "Twelve Proctors" in the constitutional arrangements after 1512, but he never identifies the holders of the office; that they were Medici supporters must be taken on trust.

If Stephens thought that the interest of his subject lay not in the Florentine faction but in the nascent Medici principate itself, then perhaps he could have looked at the general social factors which favoured the development of the principate in an Italian context. At least he would have looked at the careers of trusted Medici servants much more closely than he does. Such a book would have been of great interest, but he has not written it. He makes the minimum of comparisons with places outside Florence: even Tuscan cities like Lucca and Siena, on which relevant historical work has been done, are not mentioned. Of general Italian trends which were relevant to the acceptance of the principate, like the shift to nobility among the urban patriciate, and the "disturbance" of the city councils, not a word is said. His book reflects the tendency of many practitioners of the Florentine history industry, to think only within the walls.

checked with sufficient care the information his main source, Calabrese, placed in *Apulia* also contains four mislaid place-names).

Richard Fletcher

This work is not, as its title might suggest, a historical atlas. Rather, it is yet another general account of European history between 600 and 1800. Its text is lavishly interspersed with illustrations both cartographical and pictorial. There was a time when – to a generation, like mine, brought up on textbooks entirely lacking any illustrative material save the occasional family tree of Capetian kings or Hohenstaufen emperors – the spirits would lift as the eyes lit on a work of this sort. Nowadays they tend to sink. Aren't we in danger of over-egging the pudding? Haven't we got enough books of this sort already?

To start with the pictures; they are first-rate. In particular a serious and successful effort has been made to direct the reader off the beaten track. For example, in the chapter on "Urban Society", (though I suppose San Gimignano was unavoidable), Donald Matthew – or possibly the picture-researchers – has suggested that Cordes and La Courtois should also have a claim on our visual attention; and very pretty they look – full marks to the camera of Dominique Martinez of Strasbourg.

Professor Matthew's attitude to his maps is a bit run. On the one hand he rightly praises the skill of his cartographers and praises modestly about "the importance of spatial relationships"; on the other, he keeps on telling us how difficult the maps were to make and how limited their use; this is tiresome, and taps into a confidence that would seem to have been some failure of liaison between author and cartographers. For example, the battle at which the Goths defeated the Romans in 378 is, darkly referred to in the text as "Adrianople" (Edinburg), the place features on the accompanying map (p28) as "Edinburg", but on the map on p18 it appears as "Hadrianopolis", on p37 it has become "Adrianople", but by the time we get to p184 we are back to "Adrianople" (Edinburg). What is the uninitiated reader for whom, as we shall see, the book is intended – to make of it? Again, the author has not

to make of it? Again, the author has not

# Remembrance of things to come

Robert Boyers

JORGE SEMPRUN  
What A Beautiful Sunday!  
Translated by Alan Sheridan  
239pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.  
0 06 44660 X

Jorge Semprun first addressed the Holocaust in *The Long Voyage*, a novel that told of his deportation to Buchenwald and reflected on his experience of the camps and on his post-war efforts to think about the future. Though several early readers of the novel complained that it produced abundantly the sense of déjà vu, that "every one of its episodes is reminiscent of something that has already been written", it has seemed to others one of the truly authentic Holocaust fictions, and a work of considerable literary merit as well.

In fact, the praise heaped upon the novel by Holocaust scholars is really quite remarkable in the light of the following facts: it deals in the main with the experience of Resistance fighters like Semprun himself rather than with the fate of Jews; it routinely affirms the ambition of Semprun and his comrades not to die what is called "a Jew's death", the death of those, in other words, who see themselves as victims and cannot summon the will to resist their fate; it proposes to remove the problems of which the Holocaust is the prime example by "quite simply... instituting a classless society", that is, by realizing the aims of those for whom the future is a Communist future and for whom terrorism is an acceptable strategy even when it becomes – as it does so often – a way of life. That *The Long Voyage* has continued to seem authentic even to those for whom many of its views are anathema can only be accounted for by the fact that its views are relatively incidental to its success as a novel.

But it is Semprun's carefully articulated conviction that it is his writer, and that he will have to tell his story again when he has forgotten the voyage to Buchenwald and the frame of mind in which he made sense of the Holocaust as a young man. This confession of inadequacy, which seemed somehow conventional, even hollow to readers who were impressed and instructed by the novel, has now another kind of significance. For Semprun has published another version of his story, entitled *What A Beautiful Sunday!* and if it is not so entirely a Holocaust novel as the earlier work, it is none the less a more compelling and original book. *The Long Voyage* contains valuable episodes and observations that could not be accommodated in the later work. It has an obsessive intensity and a capability for clear-eyed judgment that make it a model for other writers concerned with material that resists ordinary stragglers. But its successor is at once more subtle and more discursive, more various and ultimately more serious. In place of naked sincerity and more or less direct narration, Semprun has discovered a perspective that is predominantly reflective and intellectual. Satisfying himself for ideas, he has succeeded all the same in building a fiction by dramatizing the steady erosion of his own original views and asking us to consider what evil in history can mean when we have neither inflexible convictions nor particular goals to guide us.

To speak of the differences between the two works is to see that *What A Beautiful Sunday!* is conceived distinctly as a political novel, while the other engaged political questions at most as background to events that are compellingly displayed in *The Long Voyage* can be seen in vivid formulations like the following: "There are those who arrest and those who are arrested; or 'their' 'Krautness' is like an essence that no human act will ever be able to reach; or 'But there is no point trying to understand the SS; it suffices to exterminate them'. Striking though such observations may be, they are put forward predominantly as a means of characterizing the protagonist, of letting us know how and what he thinks. There is little effort to argue on behalf of these observations or to construct the narrative in such a way that they will seem irresistible. Plausible they do seem and perhaps also essential to anyone wishing to confront the material for the first

time. But what there is in the way of ideological conviction seems almost entirely extraneous to the concrete observations and narrative developments that constitute the heart of the novel. Semprun remembers whatever he can about Buchenwald and about the Nazi period generally because he wishes to put it all behind him. Compelled to remember, to bear witness, he continues to imagine that it will be possible eventually to do justice to the central truths of the Holocaust experience without rehearsing over and over, for all time, the particular events and components of that experience. The political is, in *The Long Voyage*, not so much a way of understanding the key events as an incidental reminder that there may be a future beyond them.

By contrast, *What A Beautiful Sunday!* has more to do with establishing ideological perspectives and working through issues, as though the events on the basis of which ideas might be sought were too familiar to require steady narrative elaboration. The discursive voice is, in consequence, not only more given to argument and summary; it is also more clearly concerned with the political function served by the novel. If the camp experience was here again to be a major aspect of the novel, Semprun did not wish again to present that experience for itself, as though direct presentation of principal events could conceivably provide anything like adequate knowledge. Like the earlier novel, the later work "complicated memory by making it an act of anticipation as well as recollection, thus adding to the familiar 'remembrance of things past' a seemingly impossible 'remembrance of things to come'".

But in *What A Beautiful Sunday!* the "things to come" serve not so much to underline the singularity of the Holocaust as to make it seem at once enduringly important and not so distant in the memory; it is quite another thing to argue that subsequent events and intellectual discoveries have made one's original experience of the Holocaust irretrievable. It is the burden of Semprun's later novel to indicate that the Nazi campaign to exterminate the Jews may well have been like nothing else in Western history, but that attempts to isolate it from other comparable events are in a sense innocent and misguided; innocent, in the sense that one is not then required to see how widespread are instances of extreme inhumanity in recent history and how precarious are the humane solutions we rely upon; misguided, in the sense that efforts to understand are not compromised but enhanced when particular situations are studied alongside other comparable situations, the chief effect of such juxtaposition usually amounting to a sharp appreciation of crucial differences.

Semprun, of course, was from the first aware of the dangers inherent in adopting too broadly humanistic or general a perspective on these matters. In *The Long Voyage*, he reports on a surprise visit he made to the house of a woman who lived just outside the margins of Buchenwald. The time is shortly after his release from the camp. Clearly frightened by his persistent, simple questions ("In the evening, when the flames shot up behind the crematorium chimneys, could you see the flames?"), she tells him that both of her sons were killed in the war. "She takes refuge", as Semprun has it, behind the sorry facts. "She's trying to make me believe that all suffering is the same, that all the dead weigh the same." This Semprun refuses to believe, and he manages to resist the thought by insisting that he is happy the woman's sons are dead. He feels no need to explain this satisfaction to the woman or to us. He can "understand her sorrow", but he resists principally the difference between her suffering and the suffering of those who were reduced to smoke and ash. In a similar way, he is firmly reminded by a Jewish survivor that he has no right to speak of the times when he regretted not being a Jew. "You don't know what you're saying", she is compelled to tell him. For between the Jewish victim who can truly say, "No one has ever helped me" and a sympathetic comrade who guesses that "maybe I was lucky" there is a gap that no humanitarian fellowship can bridge.

Aware of fundamental distinctions, however tempted to abandon them in the interests of a consolatory broad-mindedness, Semprun nevertheless returned to the Holocaust not to speak again of its irreducible singularity but to consider it in the light of very different experiences. Chiefly, *What A Beautiful Sunday!* – though structured around Buchenwald Sunday routines – tells of Semprun's break with the Communist party and his efforts to understand what made him a credulous partisan. It is a story he had previously told in an enthralling memoir, entitled *The Autobiography of Federico Sanchez and the Communist Underground in Spain*. But the novel is even more intriguing by virtue of the greater variety of themes it pursues, and by virtue of the central connection between the Nazi and Stalinist camps it is assiduous to establish. To some readers it may well seem that Semprun loses in focus and in depth of understanding what he gains in variety and ingenuity of suggestion. Scholars like H. Stuart Hughes have long contended, after all, that discussions of totalitarianism founded upon a common treatment of Nazism and Stalinism inevitably sacrifice all grasp of "underlying social realities" and attend instead to "techniques of control – the horrifying surface of life". But Semprun was never chiefly interested in "underlying social realities" if by that is meant the complex of historical, national, cultural and sociological factors that might have produced a given system and the character-types that could live comfortably within it. Neither was Semprun very much interested in "techniques of control" if by that is meant an analysis of stratagems worked out by camp administrators and higher-echelon bureaucrats to terrorize their subject populations. The term "techniques of control" surely has more to do with the works of Arthur Koestler, for example, than with the work of Semprun.

So, in *What A Beautiful Sunday!* the "things to come" serve not so much to underline the singularity of the Holocaust as to make it seem at once enduringly important and not so distant in the memory; it is quite another thing to argue that subsequent events and intellectual discoveries have made one's original experience of the Holocaust irretrievable. It is the burden of Semprun's later novel to indicate that the Nazi campaign to exterminate the Jews may well have been like nothing else in Western history, but that attempts to isolate it from other comparable events are in a sense innocent and misguided; innocent, in the sense that one is not then required to see how widespread are instances of extreme inhumanity in recent history and how precarious are the humane solutions we rely upon; misguided, in the sense that efforts to understand are not compromised but enhanced when particular situations are studied alongside other comparable situations, the chief effect of such juxtaposition usually amounting to a sharp appreciation of crucial differences.

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Semprun's aim, in *What A Beautiful Sunday!*, is not to account for the Holocaust or for the willing complicity of persons like himself in the crimes of Stalin and his successors. Neither is it to evoke suffering or to apologize or get even. His aim is to show how a man endowed with great intelligence and passion can think about something for many years without feeling that he has accounted for it and without abandoning the belief that politics is an indispensable aspect of our capacity to deal with our condition. Nothing is so exemplary in Semprun's novel as his continuing to resort to political analysis after referring, again and again, to the consequences of political illusion. Unwilling to provide a conventionally satisfying representation either of camp life or of the left-wing activist's familiar routines, he opts for the sharp glimpse and the vivid tableau in place of the realist's totalizing portrayal of the individual set within a commanding social world. Out of these marginal glimpses and occasional narrative forays he builds a sense of a virtual world and its various settings without permitting us to feel that we have ourselves inhabited those settings. Always our attention is drawn to the shifting of Semprun's perspective.

The politics that emerges from these reflections is not an ideological programme but a way of seeing that is finally resistant to visionary projects. In Semprun we have a politics conceived as a mode of continuous discourse, so that the surface of the novel is in the main a sequence of open-ended arguments that proceed in fits and starts without presuming to arrive at permanently binding conclusions. Politics, in fact, is here represented as the impulse to oppose "the natural order of history" by thinking so rigorously as to betray all class allegiances and to court disorder. The politics, so-called, of those who cultivate correct thoughts is therefore viewed as a violation of the very idea of politics and a form of submission to the reigning *Zeitgeist*. To conceive politics as discourse, to construct an entire novel as a mode of anxious if fragmentary discourse, is for Semprun to oppose with his entire being the submission of persons to the ostensive facts.

Though Semprun leaves behind him the

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